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The Trail of the Dragon and Other Stories

William B. Cairns Collection
Of
American Women Writers
1650-1920

William B. Cairns
Professor of English
University of Wisconsin-Madison


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THE TRAIL OF THE DRAGON

AND OTHER STORIES

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THE TRAIL OF THE DRAGON AND OTHER STORIES

BY

MARY F. NIXON-ROULET
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THE TRAIL OF THE DRAGON.

BY MARY F. NIXON-ROULET.

NANNIE MAY OCHILTREE was in the deepest, deadliest blues. She was usually so bright and gay that the whole family could not possibly imagine what was the matter. The mother fancied that she was bored. Nannie May had just returned from a visit to the World's Fair—a treat which her aunt had given her. She had had a royal time, and never grew tired of recounting her adventures to the younger children.

"I imagine," said Mrs. Ochiltree to her husband, "that things seem rather humdrum to Nannie May after all she has seen and done."

"Better not let her go next time. That's the worst of having rich relatives," grumbled the father, "they make you discontented."

"Oh, Nannie May will settle down in a few days and be all right," said the mother placidly.

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Ten year old Bob—of course his name was Robert Lee Ochiltree—had not gone to the Fair, and he gave it as his opinion that "sister's grouchy, and has had too much fuss made over her." Ethel Maud, aged eight, not capable of giving reasons why, thought she acted "mighty funny." The baby, who could neither reason nor express himself, felt that she was different, while old Aunt 'Liza declared "that young 'un's top-notchety, sho' 'nuff."

Nannie May really seemed unable to take an interest in anything. Indeed, so listless did she appear that Aunt Evelyn expressed herself forcibly to her sister-in-law:

"Alice, that child is going to be ill. She acts exactly as Mary's little girl did when she came down with typhoid fever."

Mrs. Ochiltree thought not, and volunteered the opinion that Nannie May's only trouble was *ennui.* The aunt was scandalized, and thought how much better she understood her niece than did the child's mother.

"*Ennui,* indeed! Why, the child was as gay as a lark all the time she was with me! I never had better company! She was so interested in everything, she never looked dull once while we were away. I can always manage Nannie."

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"Oh, it's easy enough to be pleasant when you are having your own way," Mrs. Ochiltree remarked drily, and changed the subject. Mrs. Ochiltree had a belief of long standing that no one could possibly know children as well as their mother, and it irritated even her sweet disposition to have any one claim greater understanding of her little ones than she herself. But there was no use talking to Aunt Evelyn! She had learned never to discuss things with her husband's sister. That very much unmarried gentlewoman had not endured the chastening effects of matrimony, with its valuable lessons in holding the tongue, and she was wont to pursue the subject to the bitter end.

But Nannie May herself knew exactly what was the matter with her. The trouble was a disease incident to girlhood, the gnawings of an aroused conscience. She was in what Bob would have termed a scrape, and she saw no way out, because, first of all, she was ashamed to tell her mother of what she had done; second, because even if she consulted that oracle of grace she felt sure that there was nothing that even she could do to help her. And, worse than anything in the world, the little girl disliked to see her mother's face fall, and hear her gentle voice say, in its sweet Southern

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accents, "Why, Nannie May Ochiltree, I'm disappointed in you!"

Nannie May adored her mother and meant to please her, but it was hard to think and remember always. Especially in regard to money was Nannie May incorrigible. She would lose, she would spend, she would borrow. At least these were her faults until her financial affairs were discovered to be in such a state of collapse that she was declared bankrupt, and went into the hands of a receiver. Unfortunately for Nannie May's peace of mind, but fortunately for her ultimate character, the pilot appointed to carry the mournful little derelict into port was her father.

Judge Ochiltree was a Southern gentleman; kindly, courteous, amiable to a degree, he was severity personified to any deviation from his code of honor. Stern to others, he would have been even more so to any lapse in himself, and he was noted in Shelbyville as the "honest lawyer." The iniquities of Uncle Mose caught stealing chickens might be winked at. If absolutely necessary to convict him, the Judge would in all probability say, "Mose, you black rascal, what do you mean by getting caught stealing chickens from that Yankee again?" At which Mose would grin, showing his

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white teeth, twirl his straw hat around in his fingers, quite undisturbed, and perfectly sure that "the jedge" would make it all right, say:

"I dunno, massa. Neveh had to steal nuthin' befo' the Yanks came down this hyah way, an' made me free, sah. Yo' fatheh, the Majeh, neveh'd stood a po' ole niggeh up an' talk 'bout stealin' to him. He was a mighty p'lite man, yo' fatheh was, sah!" reproachfully. To which the Judge would reply:

"Well, don't let me hear of your being caught up at that carpet-bagger's again," and pay the old darky's fine himself.

To the slippery-fingered gentry, however, Judge Ochiltree was like iron, and many a man was behind the bars of the penitentiary because of the Judge's peculiar notions as to bribes and corruption generally. The idea that one of his own family could be even careless in money matters was intolerable to him. Talking over Nannie May's delinquencies with his wife, the Judge said:

"I want you to promise me, Alice, that no matter what kind of a scrape the little girl gets into, you will not help her out. She must learn to be absolutely honest about these things, or there will be no happiness for her in this world. I shall give

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her a suitable allowance, upon condition that she does not borrow a cent or go in debt, and whenever she does, the allowance stops. Isn't that fair?"

"Ye-es," Mrs. Ochiltree hesitated. "It's fair, but poor Nannie May will have a hard time learning her lesson."

"Most of us do." The Judge knit his brows. There were those who remembered a young brother of his, a brilliant fellow, charming, handsome, careless, with a generous, easy nature, and the idea that the world owed him a living. There was a tragic story of his losses; some whispered forgery, his despair and early death, but the affair had been hushed up quickly, and no one knew why his name was seldom mentioned in the family. It was of him the Judge was thinking, and he added: "Nannie May reminds me a little of Eustace, Alice; but she has strength of character enough to correct her faults if she begins now."

"You are right, dear, as you always are," Mrs. Ochiltree said gravely. "But don't be hard on my little girl."

"Your little girl is mine, too," he said, as he kissed her on her soft cheek, as fair as when he married her fifteen years before.

So Nannie May had a long talk with her father

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in his study. She came out with red eyes, a very subdued air, and the knowledge that she was to have at her disposal the sum of one dollar a month. When she had spent that, no matter for what purpose, she would have no more. She must not beg, borrow nor steal, and she must not spend gifts from Aunt Evelyn. Anything coming from that source must be put in the savings bank.

"I think a dollar a month is enough for a girl of thirteen to spend," said her father. "If you can earn money, you are at liberty to spend or save it as you wish. But all your regular expenses must come out of your allowance. I want you to grow up like your mother, my child. She has a finer sense of honor than most men, and I could trust her with every cent I have in the world and know that she would take care of it for me. In that, as in everything else, 'the heart of her husband doth safely trust in her.' A nice thing to have your husband say of you when you are grown up, isn't it?"

Nannie May had choked as she said yes. She worshiped her grave father, and a word from him went a long way, but he kissed her on the forehead, and, with his fine courtesy, which was never laid aside even at home, and which went so far to mak-

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ing his children polite, he opened the door for her and bowed her out.

Nannie May flew to her mother and poured out all her news in a wild torrent, half crying—for she hated to be found fault with and especially by her father—but proud of her new honors.

"I'm to have an allowance, just like you, mother. Isn't it grown up and fine? And I can spend it any way I like. I shall never be in debt again. I've never had any money to spend when I needed it, because the minute I had any, I have always had to go around to pay off everybody I had borrowed from, and there wasn't any left after that.

"Father was so nice. He said I ought to be an example to Bob, to make him grow up good, as if any boy named Robert Lee could be anything but all right! He said a girl ought to be a model of probity. I don't know what that means, but it's something lovely because he said you were one. Isn't father just the honestest, splendidest man in all the world, except you?" and the little girl threw her arms around her mother and kissed her ecstatically.

"I think he is." The mother flushed and smiled brightly. She was a very happy woman, partly

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because of the ever chivalrous devotion of her stalwart husband and lovely children, but even more from her own gentle sweetness and stability of character, which persistently minimized trouble until it gave to her no carking care to mar her serenity of soul.

In the first flush of her wealth, Nannie May promised many things. She was to give twenty-five cents a month to the missionary society, and, as all the girls were to do, a special offering when the annual collection was taken up.

"I don't know how much, but at least two dollars," she had said airily. And this was her undoing, for lo, the time for the annual meeting was at hand, and she not only had nothing saved up to meet the emergency, but was four months behind with her dues. Her allowance for the month would just pay the dues, but where could she get anything for the meeting which was to come off in two weeks? All the girls were talking about it. Eva Tracy had a china pig full of coins, which animal was to be broken upon the altar of sacrifice at the meeting. Jane Stuart had a nickel bank full to the brim, and it held fifty nickels. There was no end to the things the girls had done to procure this money, and they were all to tell their methods

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at the meeting. She, glibbest of tongue in all the society, must be silent. She had nothing—nothing at all!

For poor Nannie May had spent every cent she could rake and scrape at the Fair. The girl was completely carried away with the quaint and curious things she had seen, and she had bought just a trifle here, and another there, until when she returned home she was absolutely penniless. Of course, the things were not all for herself. Nannie May was generous, at least she was after a fashion. Of the generosity which gives itself at any cost she knew nothing, but she liked to give things to people. It flattered her vanity to have people thank her and say:

"How lovely you are to me! What a generous girl you are!" And, too, she really enjoyed giving pleasure. Many of the trifles she had bought were intended as Christmas presents for her friends and others for the family. Only a few were for her own room, a charming little sanctum into which she had been promoted from the nursery when she was ten, on condition that she herself took care of it, and of which she was very proud.

As Nannie May thought of the coming missionary meeting she looked around her dainty room in

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dismay. "I wish every one of those wretched Fair things were in Guinea!" she moaned, from the depths of her pillow, indulging in a good cry. "Yes; even my darling, precious heathen idol, all the way from Mandalay. I don't care if it is the second cousin of the 'Great God Budd,' and one of Supiyalat's friends. It's too cute and funny for anything, and my Japanese dragon is a perfect dear, but it's a white elephant to me when I think of the money I owe. It's no use to tell mother, 'cause she promised father to let me 'dree my ain weird,' and it will only make her feel badly, and father would say I was a disgrace to the Ochiltrees. If I'd only been born Smith or Jones perhaps he wouldn't feel so about Ochiltrees. It's awful to have family records to live up to! Oh, plague take money anyway! When you have it you can't rest till you've spent it, and when you've spent it you're in a fever till you get some more. I never had anything I couldn't tell mother about, and I'm just desperate!" And she cried herself to sleep.

Next day was the regular meeting at which the monthly dues were paid, and Nannie May, still clad in "weeds of loathed melancholy," hied herself to the meeting. She paid her back dues, thank-

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ful to have at last that off her mind, and relapsed into unwonted silence.

The Missionary Society was a great institution. Its president was Miss Irma Bryant, beloved of girls of all ages. Friend and adviser to, and confidant of, half the girls in Shelbyville, Miss Irma was white-haired at thirty-five, but the freshness of girlhood lingered in her clear eyes and peachy cheeks, and the eternal springs of girlhood were in her heart. She understood girls perfectly, and she was a power among them. She had started the Missionary Society partly to keep her girls out of mischief, incidentally to instruct them in geography, and to give them breadth of view, and the help they gave to the "Propagation of the Faith" went to many climes, without reference to "age, color, sex, or previous condition of servitude," as Nannie May grandiloquently expressed it. To teach her girls a gentle charity toward all and true benevolence was Miss Irma's main idea, and under her beneficent guidance the society flourished.

She saw as soon as she looked at Nannie May that there was more amiss than the convenient headache which the young girl pleaded, and determined to find out what was the trouble with her favorite. She loved the bright, warm-hearted girl

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dearly, but she felt that there was much in her character which would bring her to grief did she not learn to curb her tendency toward carelessness and extravagance, and she wanted to help her.

It was whispered in Shelbyville that the reason Miss Irma had never married was because of a lover far in the background of her youth, and something very tender always came into Judge Ochiltree's voice when he spoke with this woman, who he alone knew might have been his sister.

"Nannie May, walk home with me and tell me all about your trip," said Miss Irma, and the girl brightened up as she replied:

"Thank you, Miss Irma; I shall be glad to."

Then she relapsed into a moody silence again, broken only once during the meeting when, to the astonishment of every one, she laughed. Nannie May was usually irrepressible and inopportune in her mirth, but she was never irreverent. Consternation was universal, therefore, when, as Miss Irma's voice, solemn and sweet, rang out in their verse for the day, "What hast thou in thine house?" Nannie May giggled hysterically. Conscious then of what she had done, she buried her face in her hands and kept it there until the meeting was dismissed.

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"What hast thou in thine house? What can you give to God? Not merely money, girls, but time and thought and generous deeds of unselfish love for others. These things are the best gifts. Each one ask yourself as you go home, 'What have I in my house?'"

Shamefacedly, Nannie May lingered for Miss Irma, but that dear lady took no notice of her mood, and drew her along, talking brightly until they reached her lovely home, the home of her family for generations.

"Come up into my room," she said, "and we'll have a good long talk. Chloe, bring us some tea. It begins to grow cold, doesn't it? I always want a big fire the first cool days. Now, then, are you comfortable?" as she pushed her guest down on a pile of cushions before the big fireplace with its cozy blaze, and seated herself at the tea-table, a smile on her charming face.

"Ever so comfy," said Nannie May. "Oh, Miss Irma, you're too good to me. Will you excuse me for laughing this afternoon?"

"Certainly I will. But I'd like ever so much to know the joke. I love a merry jest, and I know yours must have been a good one," she said.

Nannie May laughed again.

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"Well, I should say it was!" She giggled, then sobered down quickly.

"Now, dear, tell me about everything, not only the joke, but what the matter is with you," Miss Irma said.

"I'm ashamed to," said the girl.

"Nonsense! We all do things we ought not. But there! don't tell me unless you really want to and think I can help you."

"Oh, I know you'll help. It's only that I have been so horrid, and I hate to have you think badly of me, I do love you so! But I am in the awfullest scrape, and I've only two weeks to get out of it, and I can't see even the least rung of a ladder to climb on. I may as well tell you the whole thing," and without giving herself time to think, she plunged into the story of her extravagance and its result. Finishing with:

"I simply haven't a cent, not one, and won't have until after the meeting. I promised a gift, and now I have to break my word and all the girls will know, and father will say I have disgraced him, and mother'll be disappointed in me, and maybe we can't raise the money for that missionary box, and—oh, dear, I can't see why I acted so! I was going over it all in the meeting and

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thinking of all the things I had bought at the Fair: of the thirteen sets of 'Nikko monkeys' I had for the girls in my class—you've seen those dear little Japanese monkeys, No-Hear-Bad, No-See-Bad, No-Say-Bad, all joined, from the temple at Nikko. And of all the other things! And when you asked 'What hast thou in thine house?' I almost said, 'Thirty-nine monkeys,' and then I giggled right out. I saw the whole line of pagan things. Thirty-nine monkeys, two East Indian cobra candlesticks, Gungaga, goddess of the Ganges, an Allahabad peacock vase, a Ceylonese sacred elephant carved in cocoanut, a Chinese sacred bird in jade, a Japanese bell with a dragon, a brass dragon candlestick, a bronze dragon lamp, a vase with a dragon in copper—oh, a whole menagerie of dragons in my house, Miss Irma, and not a penny to bless myself with! It was too absurd!" and she laughed until she cried, and buried her curly head in her friend's lap.

Miss Irma laughed, then quietly stroked the bowed head. All the mother in her breast went out to this child, so bright, so gay, so ardent, so impulsive, so generous, so wilful, so sweet. Add but stability to this character, and what a power she could be!

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So when Nannie May raised tear-wet lashes, and, looking with eyes in which laughter and tears still lingered, said, mournfully, "Is there any way out?" Miss Irma answered quietly, "There is, dear, but a hard one."

"Will it be as hard as to be in? Do tell me! I'll do anything." The girl's tone was fervent.

"If you really want to make up for what you have done, I'll help you, but you must let me tell you just what I think."

"Yessum." The tone was meek.

"I think to make a promise and not to keep it is lying." Miss Irma's tone was calm and cool, and Nannie May winced. "I think to spend money which is promised elsewhere is stealing, and I think the most important promise on earth to keep and the most important debt to pay is one to God. I do not mean that you intended to tell a story, or not to pay your debts, but you are quite old enough to learn to be honorable to man and God. I know that you feel that way, too, so I am willing to help you, dear. How would you like to bring your things over here, and have a sale of them for the benefit of the Society? People around here haven't seen many such things, and they'll go wild over them."

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"Oh, Miss Irma, what a splendid idea!" Nannie May's face was all alight. "I'll gladly do it. To tell the truth, it makes me sick to see the things anyway! I've been fretted and worried so with them, that 'the trail of the serpent is over them all,' but my serpent is a dragon. But not everything, Miss Irma?"

"Yes, everything. It wouldn't be any sacrifice if you gave up only the things you didn't care for, dear."

"Oh, Miss Irma, not every single thing! Not the corals Aunt Evelyn gave me, not the Cloisonné vase for mother's Christmas present, and not the —the thing I got for you!" Nannie May's voice reached from discomfiture to a wail of woe.

"Not your aunt's gifts. You have no right to sell those. Not what you have for your mother —you never can be good enough to your mother, no girl can; but most certainly anything you have for me, dear. I couldn't feel like having it for fear it was bought with missionary money!"

Miss Irma felt like an executioner as she spoke, but she nerved herself with the thought that Nannie May must have a lesson.

"Oh, dear, if you'd only let me give something to you I wouldn't mind, but of course you won't.

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Well, roll on your Juggernaut! Anyway, I'll be out of this awful mess, and if I ever promise a penny of my money to anything, I'll bore a hole through the penny and tie a string and a tag to it!"

"There's just one thing more, Nannie May. You must tell your father and mother and ask their consent to the sale!"

"Oh, Miss Irma, if you only knew how glad I am to tell mother! It's nearly been the death of me to keep it from her. I always tell her everything, but I was ashamed this time until I saw a way out. Father will be displeased, but I'll have to brace up to tell him, for if I didn't he'd be praising me for being generous and selling my duds. It would be simply ghastly to be praised under false pretenses."

"You're a dear, honest, naughty little soul," said Miss Irma, kissing her. "Now, run home and get it over, and we'll begin to plan for the sale as soon as your mother gives her consent."

"It will be perfectly lovely," cried the mercurial girl, springing to her feet. "Some of them we'll have auctioned off, and it'll be so exciting. And anyway I had the fun of buying the things."

"Oh, Nannie May, you are incorrigible!" half-

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laughed her friend. "Aren't you ever going to learn anything?"

The girl was sober in an instant.

"Dear Miss Irma, I am. I wouldn't be as wretched as I have been the last few weeks for anything in the world. All the things in the Fair aren't enough to make me willing to hate myself like that again."

Nannie May's "Pagan Sale," as she called it, was a great success. It assumed vast proportions, for when Aunt Evelyn heard of her favorite niece's scheme, and saw how her heart was in it, she contributed largely of her treasures, and persuaded fashionable friends from the city to do likewise, so that to Nannie May's monkeys, dragons, and cobras were added enough animals to fill the ark. The proceeds thereof was over a hundred dollars for the Missionary Society.

At Nannie May's next birthday her happiness was complete, for Miss Irma's gift to her was a little bronze Japanese temple with a slit in the roof to slip in coins, with a bewitching dragon coiled around its base, and upon its side a quaint motto in Japanese which, translated, read:

"Pay what thou owest,
Save what thou canst,
Spend what thou must."

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THE HOSPITAL SCAPEGRACE.

BY MARY F. NIXON-ROULET.

THE Sisters of St. Rose were good souls. Coming as they did from simple surroundings, their simple life was to them pleasant and satisfying. There was, at times, a degree of strenuousness, when, for example, the Terminal Railway, after a worse smash-up than usual, sent in twenty-five accident cases at once, and the chief surgeon had gone to a Caledonian banquet. The assistant was equal to his task, but he kept the nursing Sisters trotting while the fray lasted. Despite these exciting seasons, smallpox scares, and the varying shifting scenes of hospital life, the Sisters plodded along the even tenor of their quiet way. Teutons, for the most part, when their Order was dispersed three of the plucky souls sought America, drifting to a hospitable Southern city, loyally Catholic.

There they struggled along, blessed and happy, their struggles for self-support ending in good fortune, when their convent was built, through their

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own efforts and the gifts of good Catholics. Their numbers increased, and soon theirs was the best hospital in the city. A number of new novices had recently come among them, and one of them, Sister Callista, was far from Teuton in calm. She was little and slight and wiry. She was all nerves from head to feet. She was light of foot and swift to laugh, and her crown of ebon hair, wilful tendrils of which would creep out from the novice's cap, and her violet eyes heavily lashed in black, proclaimed her a daughter of Erin. She was quick of tongue, hasty, easily angered, as easily pleased, and with her slower neighbors she was angry, disdainful, and pleased again before they at all realized that there was anything the matter. The sick loved to have her in the wards, and her dexterity with them and her happy knack of pleasing the most captious made the wise Reverend Mother want to keep her, even though counseled against it by her advisory board.

"She's the most nervous creature, Mother. Jumps at a mouse and is afraid of a shadow," said sedate Sister Margaret Mary, who hadn't a nerve in her angular Alsatian body. "She's only a child, anyhow. Why do you let her try to make her first vows even? She'll never stay."

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"Let her make up her own mind, Sister," said the Reverend Mother, quietly. "She has nine years to do it in before the final vows. I think she'll make a good nun when she's toned down, and it takes all kinds of nuns to run a hospital."

So Sister Callista made her first vows, and oh! what spirit she did infuse into that sober, hard-working community! There wasn't a nun, even the grimmest and most ascetic, who could help liking her. The little nun was really almost a child, who had to have some outlet for her high spirits, and if the outlet took the form of damaging her elders' gravity it mattered little to her. Well was it for her that the Reverend Mother was possessed of some remnants of a sense of humor, for thereby the convent scapegrace escaped many scoldings. If she could but catch the Reverend Mother's eye, and surprise a laugh therein, she knew it was all right, and her own dimples would work bewitchingly.

Of course, the Superior always knew where to lay the blame for any mischief that might be afoot. When some one jumped out of a dark corner and frightened her almost to death, after the first squeal, Reverend Mother only said calmly, without looking around, "Sister Callista, go to the chapel

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and say five Hail Marys that I may never lose patience with you."

When the chief surgeon complained of a bad taste in his iced tea at luncheon, and when on investigation the decoction was found to be soap bark instead of tea, Reverend Mother asked quietly,

"Where was Sister Callista this morning?"

When the archbishop and several of the reverend clergy came to make a little visit to the Sisters, and were received with great éclat in the community-room, where the archbishop made an address to two rows of listening nuns, and when all rose to bid him adieu, only to find themselves firmly tied to their chairs, Reverend Mother said, without even turning her head, "Sister Callista, untie those girdles!"

Yet, with all her pranks, the little nun's duties were always well done. Her step was untiring, her spirits never flagged, and she was oftener found in the chapel than many quieter Sisters, though when questioned a little as to her evident devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, she would only say,

"You'd better let me alone. Sure, there's no telling how bad I'd be if I didn't get to chapel often."

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"But what will you do up in heaven, where it's chapel all the time?" asked Sister Hildegarde, the demure.

"I don't know that," said Sister Callista. "But I'm thinking St. Patrick and St. Bridget will be making their jokes. Maybe they'll be after letting me hear them and laugh once in a while." At which Sister Hildegarde opened her china-blue eyes and said,

"I never expect to get close enough to the saints to talk to them."

"'Deed, and it's not much they'll miss, then, I'm thinking," said Sister Callista, tartly—then, ashamed of herself, "But, Sister dear, you'll just take your purgatory out down here, living with the likes of me." To which Sister Hildegarde only made answer,

"Oh, Sister Callista!"

Things went on till Sister Callista had been three years in the convent, and still she did not sober down.

"She is the same monkey that she was the first day she came," said the assistant to the Reverend Mother. "Do you mind, Mother, how she made even you laugh the first night by tying a spider made of burnt cork to your girdle, and how every

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one thought it was a real spider crawling up your habit and tried to rescue you from it?"

"Only yesterday she was up to more mischief," said Sister Margaret Mary. "You know how Sister Antonia hates a cat. Well, last night when she went to bed her foot struck a woolly ball at the bottom of her bed, and she jumped out with a squeal that a cat was in her bed. When a light was brought it was only a feather duster. No one needed to ask who put it there!"

"She is really incorrigible," said Reverend Mother. "But that wasn't the worst she did last night."

"I didn't hear anything else," said Sister Margaret Mary. "What was it?"

"Oh, nothing to speak of, merely came near to breaking the neck of one of the Sisters. About eleven o'clock Sister Justina thought she heard a noise in the storeroom and went to investigate. She went over to the far corner and stooped to pick up the cat causing the disturbance. Suddenly a huge dishpan was brought down upon her head, and she was nearly stunned by the blow. It was Sister Callista, of course. She was on night watch and had heard the noise. She saw the figure in the dark and supposed it was some one hiding

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from her, 'so she just banged the pan on her head to arouse her to a sense of duty, Mother!' She's a perfect case. But, after all, what would we do without her?"

"I think we might get along very quietly," said Sister Margaret Mary.

It was a bitterly cold winter. The poor suffered frightfully, and the Sisters worked much among them. There was more sickness than usual at the hospital, and all the Sisters were worn out with the constant strain. The Reverend Mother went away for a week to visit another hospital of her Order, and while she was gone there came a great and terrible smallpox scourge. A regular epidemic swept over the town. Doctors and nurses were petitioned to volunteer for service at the Quarantine Hospital. Yet there was no cause to fear lest the victims would be neglected, for heroism displayed itself, and many devoted ones braved death to nurse the plague-stricken city.

"We are glad to have you back, Mother," said Sister Margaret Mary. "There are terrible times here. Five of the Sisters have gone to the smallpox hospital since yesterday."

"Why? Who went?" the Reverend Mother looked anxious.

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"There was a call for volunteers," was the reply. "Sister Antonia, Sister Ludwig, Sister Anastasia, Sister Frances, and Sister Callista."

"Why did you let that child go?" Reverend Mother's face was anxious. "She is not strong enough."

"I could not keep her and let the others go, could I? She seemed bent on going, and was perfectly well. She went off in great spirits, laughing and talking. 'Tell Reverend Mother I'm going for the sake of the poor Irish out there dying for the want of a joke,' she said, and away she went."

"Our Lady bring her back," said the Reverend Mother, who watched over her flock as best she might. She was a good soul, kind and patient, and always doing her best according to her lights.

She prayed much for Sister Callista. The face of the little nun would obtrude itself between her and her prayer-book at all times, and she simply had to give up her time to prayer for her. The whole community missed her. Even the most staid, whom she had always teased the most, confessed that they wished her back, and the chronic cases in the wards moped visibly. Among these was old Jim, a rheumatic cripple for ten years, kept through charity, able now and again to hobble

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around and do odd jobs to help the Sisters, but oftener only a bundle of complaints. Jim had a bad attack shortly after Sister Callista left, and growled until his nurses were nearly crazy.

"Send for her to come home or send me out there," he declared peevishly. "I'd rather have the smallpox than be prayed to death down here with nothing worse than a crook in me legs!"

But Sister Callista came not, and at last came the news that she had taken the disease and was at death's door. How they prayed! Then her pranks were forgotten or remembered but with tearful smiles, and one and all recalled some bright word of sympathy, some kind little deed, done so quietly that no one might find it out.

"She was nearly the death of us all, but she was the life of the house," said Sister Margaret Mary, and the Reverend Mother sighed.

It was long before there came any more news, for the quarantine was strictly kept. There was naught to do but pray, and as the chaplain said Mass one morning, every head was bowed and the rosaries slipped through eager fingers. Upon the altar the lights were softly burning, and flower scents filled the air as the sculptured saints looked down upon the kneeling figures. There was no ser-

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mon, but when the Mass was over the chaplain spoke gently to the waiting nuns, asking their prayers for all the victims of the plague, living and dead.

"I grieve to tell you," said the kind old man, "that the morning paper announces the death of one of your number—Sister Callista, a martyr." And he concluded with kind words about her, of her cheery kindness, her genuine piety, words which halted, stumbled, and stopped suddenly as he caught the glance of a pair of eyes which met his with a look of puzzled wonder, then changed into laughter under his astonished gaze. Without the chapel there was a great buzzing of voices, as if a beehive had suddenly been disturbed as there appeared among the nuns the little black figure, so slight as to be naught but skin and bones.

"Sister Callista!" Reverend Mother's voice was astonished.

"Sure, it's me. Bad pennies always turn up, and the news of my martyrdom was exaggerated. I'm not dead at all, at all! It's some one else, God rest her soul! I wasn't good enough to go yet—" Then, as she caught sight of Father Caton, "The top of the morning to you, Father, and it's grateful I am to you for preaching me funeral sermon.

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Sure it isn't every day you'll be delivering a panegyric and having the corpse thank you kindly when it's over, is it, Father? But, dear me, I'll wish I was dead and gone trying to live up to all those fine things you said about me!" And she put on a comical look of despair.

"Sister!" Reverend Mother's voice was a little grave. She did not feel that jesting with the reverend clergy was quite the proper thing. "Won't even the smallpox hospital sober you?"

Over Sister Callista's face there stole a shade, and one noticed how thin were the sunken cheeks, how pale the once ruddy skin. She flashed a quick glance at the white-haired priest, and read in his eyes a perfect understanding as he read in hers a mute appeal.

"There is such a thing," he said quietly, "as being sobered so completely that one wishes never to be sober again."

The Sisters looked dazed, but as the bell rang and they hastened into the chapel once more, little Sister Callista paused a moment to say softly,

"Thank you, Father, oh, thank you! I thought you'd understand."

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NEDDY'S ACHIEVEMENT.

BY MAGDALEN ROCK.

MRS. SANDYS stood at the open window of the rectory breakfast-room, complacently surveying the garden wherein her husband was roaming, and noting, with the keen delight of the botanist, the unfolding of some of his cherished blooms. Mrs. Sandys, her enemies said, was the real rector of the parish; but she allowed her husband perfect liberty in his gardening, and the result was not unsatisfactory in regard to the gardens. There were long shady alleys where one might loiter in the heat of a June day, and big beds where carnations and roses of every hue and shade grew and flourished. There were lilies, tall and stately, and immense banks of sweet peas and fragrant mignonette, and beds ablaze with geraniums and calceolarias. Further away, beyond the thick hedges of rhododendrons, were the strawberry beds and bush fruit garden, and beyond that was the orchard.

It was not yet the breakfast hour, but Mrs. Sandys was an energetic lady, and more than us-

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ually so on the morning of her annual garden party. It was a form of entertainment very well suited to the rectory, and it generally drew a big crowd. The gardens in themselves were a delight, and so, too, were the dishes of freshly picked strawberries and rich cream, the delicious tea, the rich cakes and abundance of homemade sandwiches, with which Mrs. Sandys regaled her guests.

When the servant entered the room with the breakfast dishes, Mrs. Sandys called to her husband. The call was repeated twice before the Rev. Mr. Sandys came up to the window in some excitement.

"The new 'York and Lancaster' is in bloom!" he cried. "And the flower is superb, my dear, really superb! Come and see it."

"Not just now. Breakfast is served, and I have a good deal still to see to. Jane," to the servant, "tell Master Oliver and the young ladies— Oh, here they are."

Oliver Sandys and his sisters took their places quickly at the table. The girls were handsome in a showy style, while Oliver was a rather elegant young dandy who was reading for the Bar.

"The 'York and'—" the rector began, when grace was said. Oliver interrupted him.

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"You'll have a perfect day, mother," he remarked languidly. "'Tis a beastly bore, though, entertaining those humdrum country folk."

"You can't call the Duchess humdrum," the younger girl said with a laugh.

"She's an eminently disagreeable personage at all events," the young man said.

"Don't be absurd, Oliver," Mrs. Sandys admonished. "At any rate, you needn't make your opinion of Her Grace public. She rarely visits anywhere, so that it is exceedingly—" Mrs. Sandys paused for a fitting word—"kind of her to accept my invitation."

"She disappointed you last year," her elder daughter remarked.

"She had neuralgia, Ada," Mrs. Sandys replied, with dignity.

"Or said she had," Caroline Sandys laughed, as she held out her cup for an additional lump of sugar.

"Is your new acquaintance, the American, to appear?" Oliver inquired, with a look toward his mother.

"Yes. Mr. Treloar is coming. He is not an American, Oliver. He is an Englishman," Mrs. Sandys corrected.

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"Well, he made his pile in the States, didn't he?" the young man asked.

"And a very big pile, too," Caroline remarked. "He is a millionaire."

"He must be when he gave fifty thousand pounds for Boxhill," Oliver said. "It was a stiff-fish price, and I believe he has had the old place thoroughly renovated."

"Entirely so. You wouldn't recognize it," Mrs. Sandys said. "He asked our advice on almost everything. Mr. Treloar is really an acquisition to the parish. He is very generous, as your father knows."

The rector looked up from the gardening magazine he was reading.

"What did you say, my dear?" he asked his wife.

"We were speaking of Mr. Treloar," the lady replied.

"A very nice, unaffected gentleman," the rector said. "Isn't he coming to-day?"

"Of course," Mrs. Sandys answered. "I am anxious that the Duchess and he should meet here."

"By the by, Millicent," the rector said. "You might have asked that little girl who is stopping in

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the *Royal Oak* for to-day. She is leaving to-morrow."

Mrs. Sandys looked at her husband in astonishment that was too great for immediate speech.

"We met her yesterday in a donkey cart belonging to Mills, the smith," Oliver said. "Rather a good-looking young woman. Who is she?"

"She is a school teacher on her holidays, I believe," Mrs. Sandys replied shortly, "and a very impertinent young person, too. She spoke to me as if she were my equal. William," to her husband, "you surely haven't invited her to come here to-day?"

Once upon a time the rector had asked a chance acquaintance to the rectory. He was not likely to repeat the mistake.

"Asked her! No, no; of course not. I did intend to speak to you, but I forgot. She is Miss Neill, Rosalind Neill, and a very intelligent girl. Her knowledge of ferns is marvelous."

"She is a Catholic," Mrs. Sandys remarked with a sneer.

"Indeed!" the rector was not disturbed.

"And as for her looks"—Mrs. Sandys spoke for Oliver's benefit—"I don't see how they concern us. She struck me as being very commonplace."

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"'The commonplace sun in the commonplace sky makes up the commonplace day.'" The rector was fond of a quotation.

"Need we talk of the person?" Ada Sandys asked, and there was a silence, broken by Oliver asking,

"Has the millionaire any relatives? Remember, I have heard little of him."

"No; he has been seeking for a sister and her daughter," Mrs. Sandys replied. "The sister married a Catholic and her parents disowned her—very properly, too. She was much older than Mr. Treloar. He is so benevolent, so broadminded as to pardon her; but he has quite failed to find trace of the mother or daughter. He believes both are dead. Very likely they are." The lady pushed her cup and saucer away. "I have to look after Jane and the cakes."

The rectory gardens were filled that afternoon by the chief people of the county. The Duchess, indeed, had not made her appearance, and Mrs. Sandys was mentally condemning the titled lady's want of good breeding as she introduced Mr. Treloar to the various county magnates. The millionaire was a man somewhat over fifty years of age, but his upright figure and keen, good-humored

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face made him look years younger. Mrs. Sandys, as she noted the good impression he made, decided, not for the first time, that he would be a very desirable husband for Ada.

She had just consigned the gentleman to Ada's care as a battle took place between Rosalind Neill and the smith's donkey at the entrance gates. The animal had been used by the local grocer to convey some parcels to the rectory, and, as Miss Neill was returning from her daily and last hunt for botanical specimens, the donkey decided to visit the rectory in preference to going home. It was in vain that Rosalind tugged and strained at the reins, and used wheedling and objurgatory phrases. Her steed had determined to turn in at the open gates. Even a sound belaboring with a hazel switch had no effect on Neddy; and Rosalind, with disheveled hair and flushed face was borne along the narrow drive that led to the rectory just in front of the Duchess of Newbury's elegant barouche and high-stepping horses. Mrs. Sandys, for once in her life, lost her self-command at the sight of the extraordinary spectacle. The donkey, having triumphed, was proceeding leisurely, with the Newbury horses crawling perforce in the rear. The lady seized her husband by the arm and shook him.

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"You *did* invite that girl! Oh, what will Her Grace think!"

"What girl?" the rector asked in astonishment. He had been discussing roses with a kindred spirit.

"The girl from the *Royal Oak!* Don't you see?" The lady pointed dramatically to the graveled sweep before the door.

"I didn't, indeed," the rector protested, and his wife swept onward toward the donkey and cart in high wrath. The smiles on some of her guests' faces did not allay her anger. With a hasty greeting to the Duchess, Mrs. Sandys attacked the school teacher, and her nearest neighbors wondered at her power of vituperation. Rosalind attempted to explain, and the kindly rector tried to laugh over the incident, but Mrs. Sandys continued scolding till her breath failed and the tears stood in the girl's gray eyes.

"Now, now, there's no harm done, Miss Neill," the rector said. "Is there, your Grace? I'll just start this refractory animal on the road." The gentleman led Neddy toward the gate. He was joined by Mr. Treloar.

"I heard you call this young lady Miss Neill," that gentleman said. "My sister married a man of that name. You," he addressed the bewildered

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Rosalind, "are wonderfully like her. May I ask your mother's maiden name?"

"Certainly," the girl tried to steady her voice. "My mother was Janet Treloar."

"Then you are my niece, young lady," the gentleman said. And subsequent inquiries made it certain that the school teacher was the daughter of Mr. Treloar's only sister.

Rosalind discontinued teaching, and acts as mistress of Boxhall. Mrs. Sandys seldom visits her, and the intimacy between the rector's lady and Mr. Treloar has steadily declined. The gentleman evinces no desire for matrimony and has a very sincere affection for his niece. He often refers to his discovery of her as "Neddy's Achievement."

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HER UNWEDDING DAY.

BY MARION AMES TAGGART.

RUSHING up Broadway at a pace prohibited by the weather, even on the shady side of the street, Berrien Floyd ran into Eliot Dearden sauntering in the opposite direction.

"You're the very man I wanted to see!" Berry exclaimed with conviction. "I didn't know I needed you, but you fit into my yearning soul like a billiard ball into its pocket. What are you going to do over Sunday?"

"I haven't thought, except vaguely. I believe that somewhere lurking about me there's a subconsciousness of breaking waves dashing high on stern and rockbound coasts. It will probably develop to-morrow, and I shall find myself spending Sunday somewhere on Long Island," said the other.

"You will find yourself in just the opposite direction, perched two thousand feet above sea level," Berry announced authoritatively. "You are going with me up to the mountains."

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"Am I?" asked Eliot, stolidly. "Why? What should I do there if I did go?"

"Keep cool and contemplate beauty—beauty of two sorts. But that's the beginning of the next chapter," Berry replied. "Do you know Katharine Archdeacon?"

"Good gracious! No. Is she a character in a Trollope novel?" exclaimed Eliot.

"Not much!" cried Berry.

"She sounds like nothing less. I never heard such an Anglo-Gothic name. What is she? She might be an ecclesiastical fixture over yonder." Eliot indicated with his eyebrows Trinity gazing down upon them.

"She's a mighty fine girl, and she's staying up in the Poconos. You come up with me, and I'll show you whether she's fact or fiction," said Berry. "I'm going up because she sent out cards for to-night—it's her unwedding day."

"See here, Berry," said Eliot anxiously, "your brain ought to be proof against ninety degrees in the shade—it can't be more. Or have you gone back to 'Alice in Wonderland?' Do you mean that this young woman was divorced to-day?"

"I'm not responsible for the name of the celebration—in fact, I'm far from responsible for its

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being," said Berry lugubriously. "What she means to convey by issuing cards for an unwedding day is that she's twenty-seven years old, and doesn't care who knows it, and she's built herself a pretty house up there and wants a house-warming. She won't marry, so she says, though there are several of us who would do about anything you could mention to make her change her mind. And, as she feels quite sure that there'll never be a wedding day for her, she means to keep her setting up housekeeping as her Unwedding Day, a sort of vestal temple ceremony, plighting her troth to her bachelor home." Berry's face reddened and he looked very queer. "It's a trifle hard on me to see Katharine Archdeacon getting further off, even though it's something to know no other fellow can get her. Come on, Eliot; see me through!"

"As bad as that?" suggested Eliot.

"Worse," assented Berry. "It's maddening! Such a notion in a girl built to bless a man's home as Katharine could! However, it is her notion, and her friends are going to send unwedding presents, and carry it off like the real thing. I'm going to the immolation, and you're going to brace me up."

"We're blocking the way," remarked Eliot, as a

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man prodded him with the end of a long stick supporting a board on which was stated the fact that home without a child and a cuckoo clock was void indeed, and giving an address where one of these necessities could be obtained at the reasonable rate of from seventy-five cents upward.

"I can't go with you because I'd have no time to get ready," he continued, having pulled Berry out of the philanthropist's way.

"See here! It's half-past eleven now. You jump on a car, get your evening clothes and a few other vitals into your grip, and meet me at Christopher Street at twelve-fifty. Train goes at one. You've ample time. Hustle, Eliot, and don't discuss the inevitable."

Berry signaled an uptown car as he spoke, and Eliot, shaking his head, yielded, leaving Berry to pursue his way through the crowd alone, delighted with having gained his point.

Berry's calculations proved correct; Eliot made the train with a four minutes' wait for his less punctual friend.

When they were comfortably seated in the dining-car for the luncheon for which there had not been time in town, Eliot, shaking out his napkin with one hand, while with the other he drew to-

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ward him the menu card, said: "Now, describe for me this Katharine Archdeacon—shade of Anthony Trollope! I still insist she belongs to Barchester Towers!"

"It's a little difficult." Berry hesitated, busying himself with an invisible straw in the cracked ice. "You see, I'm in love with her."

"Seriously?" demanded Eliot.

"As seriously in love as a man can be," returned Berry.

"Sorry, old man," said Eliot, sincerely. "It must be hard lines, for I gather from the fact of this freak unwedding day celebration to which you're taking me that you haven't much chance."

"Not the faintest," replied Berry promptly. "We've been the best of friends, Katharine and I, for two years. Not even her repeated refusals to marry me could break that up; but the fact remains that she does refuse, emphatically. You see, she's one of those Atalanta girls—"

"From Georgia?" interrupted Eliot, surprised.

"Nonsense! I mean the Greek Atalanta; Katharine's a New Yorker. She's the kind that has no end of men friends, yet is a woman's woman. She treats a fellow with that come-on-and-stand-off manner which always reminds me of the beautiful,

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free Atalanta, who drew her suitors, yet forever outran them."

"Not forever. Atalanta dropped her apples, you remember, which showed she felt herself weakening. You know the end," added Eliot significantly, as he handed the waiter the list he had prepared. "Incidentally, Miss Archdeacon seems to be turning you into a poet."

Berry smiled ruefully, "Wait till you see her," he said.

"I suppose I may as well," assented Eliot. "Here's the soup."

They lingered long over their meal, but Eliot leaned back in his chair at last, watching Berry's slow enjoyment of his ice with paternal amusement.

"It's getting fine," he said, indicating the scenery with a comprehensive and approving gesture.

"Get's finer every foot—wait till we strike the Gap," said Berry, with the proud air of a proprietor. "See here, Eliot. I've confided in you. Haven't you joys or sorrows to unburden to me? Are you a lucky or unlucky lover?"

"Not a lover of any sort," said Eliot. "There's a funny thing about it, though. I'm haunted by a girl—a girl's face, rather. It attracts me, it—

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well, it bothers me! I get quite furious over it at times; I want to know her better. The queer part of it is that to the best of my knowledge and belief I don't know her at all. To save my life I can't think where I've seen her. I doubt if I have seen her, yet I know every line of her splendid face. She's a beauty, and a royal womanly woman besides. I'm not in love with her—how could I be? But I'm dead certain that with half a chance I should be. That's the nearest I come to having a history to impart. Not especially tragic, not even tangible or satisfactory, is it?"

"No. You can't go wither on her tomb, nor slay your rival at the altar until you get a further clue. You'll get it, though. Our threads always recross like a cobweb party. It's kismet," said Berry with unexpected philosophy. "See, there's the Gap! Not bad, is it? Five more stations, and then Pocono and Katharine?"

"If Katharine in her way is equal to the Gap, I won't complain," said Eliot, recovering the balance he had almost lost in leaning forward to see the great cleft in the mountains through which the Delaware breaks to reach the sea.

At their station Eliot's eyes fell first upon a cart driven by a girl sitting up straight and fearless

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upon the front seat. The wind was blowing her dark hair around her tanned cheeks, her eyes were shining, her lips parted in a happy smile that showed her beautiful teeth.

Eliot pointed to her, forgetful of manners, quivering with excitement,

"Berry, Berry, look!" he cried. "Look! That's she!"

"To be sure. How did you know?" laughed Berry, well pleased.

"How did you know?" retorted Eliot. "By Jove! I see! Well, of all the wonders!"

But Berry, not hearing, sprang to meet the girl, who, beckoning a man to hold her horse, jumped over the wheel and came toward him, holding out both hands like a cordial boy. So this was Katharine Archdeacon, and at the same time she was the Unknown whose face had haunted Eliot Dearden for a year!

"Ah, Berry, I'm so glad to see you," Katharine cried eagerly. "I'm going to have the nicest unwedding! I'll drive you up to the hotel. You must promise to shut your eyes when you pass my house, because no one is to see it until to-night; but there's no other way up. I came to meet some people, but they must have taken the next train."

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"Glad they missed this one, Katharine. This is my friend, Eliot Dearden, Miss Archdeacon. I brought him up to see you—well, non-married," said Berry.

The tall girl laughed joyously. "Are you really Eliot Dearden?" she said as she led the way to the cart. "It is very nice to have you here."

Eliot followed, pondering her remark. He felt certain that he had never met this girl before, never had heard her sweet alto voice, nor her infectious laugh, yet he knew her face, her eyes, the tilt of her chin, and she implied knowledge of him! It was most mysterious, and he began to be glad that he had yielded to Berry and had come to see Katharine Archdeacon's unwedding day.

He went to the curious party with pulses that beat with an irregularity of which he would not have believed them capable. During the interval between her leaving them at the hotel steps and his setting forth, but one idea had absorbed him—he had found the woman that he could love, and she was the Atalanta of Berry's simile.

Ah, but Atalanta had dropped an apple, and unwedding days were not final!

Katharine, all in white, came to meet the young men, radiating that bright joyousness which had

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struck Eliot at the station as her chief charm. Handsome she was, distinguished, winsome, and looked clever, but overtopping all her other attractions was the effulgent happiness which seemed to radiate from her presence. Her house was beautiful, simple and artistic. Eliot's critical eye noted the bachelor maid's pictures and books with mental comments of the highest approval. The rooms were filled with guests, and a glittering array of conventional wedding-gifts was displayed, precisely as at a wedding reception.

"I was obliged to wear white," laughed Katharine, sweeping the front of her gown with both hands as Berry's gaze fell upon it.

"I should think the proper unwedding gown would be black, by the law of reversal. Or is it the guests only who wear mourning?" asked Berry.

"Certainly not the heroine of the occasion," said Katharine. "Isn't it a dear house? And can't you fancy the happiness it is to feel that it is all one's own? Perhaps I ought to explain, Mr. Dearden—there's no telling what this unsympathetic boy may have said to you. You see I am certain of spending all my days alone, and that sort of life never has any definite milestone to mark its adoption—people are supposed to drift

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into it. Now, I am not drifting, so I thought I would make my house opening the definite celebration of my independence. Isn't it a happy thought?"

"It won't do any particular harm," said Eliot. "When you marry—"

"But I shall never marry," interrupted Katharine, impatiently.

"Never is a very long word to be used lightly at your age," said Eliot, with a tolerant and paternal air that made Katharine long to box his ears. "You are going to marry."

Katharine turned away, downright angry. "This sort of soothsaying is bad enough from one's friends," she said, her handsome head well up, her air that of an offended princess.

Eliot watched her down the room. "You will marry because I will marry you, willy-nilly, dear Lady Disdain," he muttered behind the hand stroking his mustache.

Berrien Floyd returned to town on Monday as he had arranged to do. He was surprised when Eliot asked him if he minded being left to return alone. He would like, Eliot said, to linger a day or two longer in the mountains which he found exceeding in charm Berry's promises for them.

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"Only too glad you don't think I let you in for a bore!" said Berry heartily.

Katharine Archdeacon drove Berry to the station, and also Eliot, to see him off. Berry went away stanchly, but his face was wistful. It was hard to go away to the void the lack of Katharine left. Katharine's face reflected the wistfulness in Berry's, and she sighed as the train moved out.

"He's a dear fellow," she said, turning away.

"And you are a good woman; you are not careless in inflicting pain," said Eliot, following her.

"I should like to shelter all the beasts, and cure every human heartache," said Katharine impulsively, as she gathered up the reins.

"A task none other I ever saw was so well fitted for," said Eliot. "Now solve my mystery. I had never seen you in the flesh until Friday night; of that I am certain, yet for a year I have been haunted by your face. What can it mean? Where have I seen you? Is it like Kipling's Brushwood Boy?"

Katharine's laugh rang out. "Not in the least; nothing half so interesting," she said. "Your cousin, Sally Goddard, had my picture. Sally and I were chums at college."

"That's it!" Eliot cried, slapping his knee as a

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remembrance of the photograph he had seen on his cousin's dressing-table flashed across him. "I have puzzled and puzzled over it in vain. I won't tell you what I have been saying to myself about this haunting face—at least not now. Berry said I should find you some day, but I didn't tell him when I caught sight of you Friday that I had found you."

Katharine laid her whip across her horse's back, and the nervous, petted creature started in surprised disapproval.

"Those cuts through the woods up the mountain are in a preserve of elks," she said.

And in the security of his seat behind her Eliot smiled, well-pleased at her irrelevancy.

For the rest of the summer Eliot haunted Pocono. Berry and he had talked the situation over, and, knowing that he had no chance, Berry had bidden his friend go in and win if he could. There seemed little likelihood that he could. Katharine was always the same cordial, friendly, unconquerable vestal that she had ever been. But she was less carelessly happy, and Eliot hoped. If the truth were told he did not so much hope as resolve to win her, even if in the end he had to resort to the methods of Young Lochinvar. He had no

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means of knowing the terror with which Katharine found herself missing him when he went, and rejoicing at the sound of his footsteps on his return. Atalanta-like, she feared the tread of love, the pursuer.

Katharine's house held her late. The leaves were tinted and the mountains clothed in glory when Eliot came up for his last Sunday.

"You are to drive me to Paradise Falls to-day," Eliot said. "You remember your promise to take me to Paradise?"

"I remember," said Katharine briefly.

In an hour they started. They bowled down the winding road, skirting the hills on one side, on the other skirted in its turn by the rushing, twisting brown brook, chattering over its rocks to the Delaware. Dark green and glossy among the splendid browns and reds and golds of the other foliage, the rhododendrons shone out from the bank on their right. The wind was sharp and bright, but the sunshine rested on them, warm as a caress. A reminiscence of the delicious odor of the wild grapes was in the air, while the nuts were dropping on the roadside, spread with its Indian carpet of colors. Through the wide valley, suggestively named Paradise, they drove and stopped at a little

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white house where a sign of domestic manufacture announced the entrance to the falls.

"Is this Michael who guards the gates of Paradise?" asked Eliot, as a man came out to collect the nickel stipend for the privilege of passing his boundaries.

"I think his name is Smith," said Katharine. And they both laughed.

Silently they walked the winding path that led them to the falls, Eliot wondering how best to carry out his resolution and return over that path with Katharine his promised wife, Katharine feeling the electrical silence in every nerve, but for once unequal to controlling the situation.

There had been heavy rains and the falls boiled over their semicircular rocks into the basin at their foot, so lovely in their setting of gorgeous colors that for a moment the lovers forgot themselves.

"These mountains perpetually remind me of a psalm. No particular psalm, but the vast, solemn music of the Hebrews," said Katharine, at last.

Eliot was behind her as she faced the half circle of the falls, her head thrown back as she drank in the light and color, the spraying dampness of the water.

"I remember only the canticle: 'My love to me

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and I to him in the vineyards of Engaddi,' he said. And then he took her in his arms. "You love me, Katharine. You are only to be taken by assault, like a strong castle. Don't struggle. You love me. Tell me so. Katharine, tell me this moment that you love me."

"I can't," she whispered. "How can I speak with—your—lips—here?"

He laughed triumphantly, and released her.

"Now tell me," he said, and fell back, waiting.

Her face expressed a storm of swiftly succeeding emotions, last of all a desperate conquest of herself.

"I love—I will never marry!" she cried.

"Yes; you will. Finish your sentence, Katharine," Eliot said.

She fell back a pace and crossed her hands humbly, yet proudly, on her breast.

"I love you, Eliot Dearden," she said. But, as he snatched her to him, she cried out, "How can I? I had my unwedding day when I met you!"

"The undoing of your unwedding day," he corrected. "As to those presents, we will send them back."

"*We!*" she cried.

"Well, as you please, but I should think it better

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for your husband to join you in returning them," he said. "My splendid, free, vestal Katharine! And I have won you!"

She looked with her clear eyes straight into his own, laying a hand from her equal height on each of his shoulders.

"I never thought that I should capitulate," she said. "Come; we must go back."

"Away from Paradise?" he asked.

"Back through Paradise," she amended.

"All our lives," he added.

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"DEM PINEY TREES."

A CHRISTMAS STORY.

BY MARY E. MANNIX.

"IT seems a very strange thing," said Miss Colville, as she went on cutting all manner of fancy figures out of bright red paper, "but really it is a fact that we have no poor people in Danville. I mean the kind one reads of in stories, to whom one goes with a well-filled basket of provisions and dainties through a driving snowstorm, etc."

She spoke languidly. One could see that the occupation in which she was engaged was merely a diversion to while away an idle hour.

"Indeed!" replied Miss Gibson, her friend and visitor, who was busily trimming one of the large Christmas trees in the middle of the Sunday-school room. "You have no poor, you say, Beatrice? Perhaps it is because they reap such harvests in summer time that the fishermen and boating people have enough to keep them through the winter?"

"That may be," was the rejoinder. "I'm sure, if there were any, Father Beale would find them

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out, wherever they might have hidden themselves away. Genteel poverty does hide itself, they say. I've never seen any of it, though I've read about it, of course."

"It is the most pitiful and the hardest to relieve," said Miss Gibson. "We have plenty of it in our town. This is an ideal place for poor people, in winter—at least. No snow or frost—no cold weather to speak of. It isn't half as bad when one can keep warm."

Squeak, squeak, went the door of the vestibule, and a round, woolly head peeped in, timidly. It was followed in a moment by a scrawny little body arrayed in a blue gingham gown, short and scant, displaying a pair of bare feet that began to patter, patter up the aisle.

"That isn't riches, surely," whispered Anne Gibson, as the child approached.

"No; it doesn't look like it," answered Beatrice.

"Missus," begn the little girl, addressing Miss Colville, whom she probably knew by sight, as every one did in Danville, "missus, would you all care if I took dem bits of piney trees dat's lyin' outside de door? I want 'em—for a reason."

"What bits of piney trees?" answered the young lady.

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"Dey done fell off dese odders when dey toted 'em in, I 'spect," answered the child. "Dem loose branches ain't no count to you, an' I'd like most awful well to have 'em—for my Miss Posey."

"Yes; you may have them, of course. But what do you want them for, and who *is* your Miss Posey?"

"And what is your own name, and where do you live?" added Anne, smiling kindly at the little creature, who now stood first on one foot, then on the other, in an embarrassed attitude.

"My name is Alviry Mintie Woodman. We lives down de beach, 'bout a mile, me and Miss Posey, in one of dem old bathin'-houses dey hauled away when de new ones was built."

"There may be some charity subjects awaiting you after all," said Anne then in a low voice to her friend. But the child's quick ears had caught the words.

"No, ma'am; no, missus; we ain't no charity people. Miss Posey she live down dar 'cause she likes de full sea-breeze. It 'grees with her, it does. I jist wanted a few of dem boughs 'cause I thought dey'd remind her of de piney trees at home. Dey does *me,* sure 'nough."

"How long have you lived on the beach?" in-

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quired Beatrice, with some interest. She was a kind-hearted girl when aroused, in spite of her languid manner.

"'Bout t'ree or four weeks," said the child. "Mebbe it's monfs. I don' know jest how long. But we likes it—we does."

"A very small house to live in, I should think."

"We'se got *two* of 'em close togedder. I mean one wif two rooms. We'se got a parlor, missus, an' I wants to fit it up for Chrismus wif some of dem piney boughs to dek'rate de walls."

"Take as many as you want," replied Beatrice, pointing to a heap of cedar boughs lying in the corner. These were to be used for purposes of decoration. "Is Miss Posey your aunt or cousin?"

"Miss Posey *my* aunt, or cousin?" echoed the child in scornful tones. "Wish you could see her! She's a heap whiter dan you is, missus. She's my *white* folks; she's all I've got left, and I'm all she's got left, 'cept Mas' Frank. Yo' don' see her at Mass 'cause she can't walk. But yo' done see me dar if yo'd looked, missus—I goes every Sunday. Mis' Posey she wouldn't let me stay home from Mass, not for nothin'."

The two girls exchanged glances. Here was clearly a case for sympathy, at least. Anne Gib-

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son left her work, and selecting some large boughs placed them in the outstretched arms of the child, who watched her eagerly.

"How many can you carry?" she asked.

"Many as you give me, missus. My, but dey 'minds me of dem piney trees at home—in Ca'lina. My, but Miss Posey'll like dat smell. Dem piney trees, dey grew so thick on we all's place you couldn't hardly see the pike from the house po'ch. T'ank you, missus, t'ank you."

"Come back to-morrow and tell us how she liked them," said Miss Gibson. "We shall be here all day. And ask her—won't you, if she would like us to call on her—Christmas."

Alvira Mintie shook her woolly head.

"Don't see how I kin' do dat, missus," she replied. "I don't mean for her to see 'em till Chrismus Day. I'm goin' to dek'rate de parlor. Miss Posey, she can't walk a step; she jest sits in her chair all de time, an' I wheels her. 'Bout you comin' to call on her—I wished ye would, but I daren't ask her. If you come, Miss Posey's too perlite to send you away. But I daren't ask her."

"Well, we shall see," said Beatrice. "We'll think about it."

"Yes, missus, do. I'd like it."

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"Alvira, how do you live?" inquired Anne, bluntly.

"We all lives on money orders," replied the child. "We gets 'em from Mas' Frank."

"Oh, that is nice," said Anne, with a sigh of relief as the child, half-hidden under the trailing boughs, passed through the door.

"That may be a case of genteel poverty," remarked Beatrice, after she had gone.

"It can hardly be affluence," responded Anne. "Shall we go and see Miss Posey?"

"Yes," rejoined Beatrice, "I think it would be a kindly thing to do. The poor lady may not want us, but as the child said, she will be too polite to repulse us. And afterwards?"

"Let Christmas take care of that," rejoined Anne.

* * * * *

The sun was low in the west as the two friends walked slowly along the beach on Christmas afternoon. Alvira had not reappeared and they had hesitated, but concluded at last to pay the intended visit. As they neared the rickety old bath-houses they saw her sitting on a broken boat, her hands behind her, her eyes looking steadfastly seaward. Her dark face brightened at their approach.

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"A merry Christmas, Alvira," said Anne. "And how is Miss Posey, to-day?"

"'Taint no merry Chrismus for me," said the child sadly, "an' 'tain't no happy one, neither, for me. 'Spect it is for Miss Posey, dough, ladies, 'spect it is."

"Is she better?"

"She's well. She's gone whar dere ain't no more sufferin'. Mis' Posey's *daid.*"

"Dead!" exclaimed both the girls.

"Yes, missus, she is. She was awful bad yisterday—and de priest he came—I went for him. I put up dem piney boughs all 'round de walls, and at de bed-head, and I fotch Miss Posey in. 'Oh!' she said, 'dat smells so good! Whar you git dem piney boughs, Alviry?' I done tol' her whar, and she say she be glad to have you all come to see her. Den Mas' Frank he cum las' night, 'cause Miss Posey she write him to. Den dis mornin' she say to me, 'Yo' good Alviry, to fix up Chrismus for me. Mas' Frank goin' to perride for you bes' he can. I'm goin' to heaven Chrismus Day.' An' so she did. Onct we all was mighty rich, but somehow dem Yankees done rid us of our lands. Mas' Frank he's only second overseer on Jimison's place hisse'f now. 'Spect I'll have to look after

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him all my loney now. But I kin do it, I kin. We's most awful glad we come here. Miss Posey she enj'yed it so."

"Where is Master Frank now?" asked Miss Colville.

"Mas' Frank he gone to see 'bout takin' we all back to Ca'lina. I'se most awful glad I t'ought 'bout trimmin' up wif dem boughs, 'cause jest a few minutes 'fore she died Miss Posey sniff and sniff, and she say, 'So good, so good, de smell of de piney boughs.' She's a lyin' in dar now, ladies. I strewn 'em all 'round her, and covered her 'most all up wif 'em. An' to-night we all are goin' start for Ca'lina to lay Miss Posey in de ol' graveyard, under de piney trees. I don't b'lieve dere's any t'ing in de whole worl' so good as de smell of dem piney trees."

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THE SEÑORA'S CHRISTMAS GIFT.

BY MARY E. MANNIX.

Two years before I had spent the Christmas holidays at San Mauricio, in the hospitable dwelling of the Señora Valeuzuala, a most estimable woman, not poor in the world's goods, as things go in that part of it, a ministering angel to her friends and neighbors in sickness and sorrow, and by reason of the leisure she enjoyed, as well as from choice and fitness, the faithful sacristan of church and altar. Mass was said but once a month at San Mauricio, but Padre Diario always found everything in readiness for him when he arrived at the pueblo the night before.

I shall not speak here of, nor is it to the purpose of my story to describe, the festivities of the Christmas season, unique and interesting as they were, savoring of the people and the soil. I shall only allude to one feature which struck me particularly at the time. Besides the open corral, in which the horses browsed at will the whole year

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round, the Señora was the favored possessor of the only stable in San Mauricio. At one side was a large manger, and this at Christmas time she was accustomed to fill with fresh, clean straw, in which on the solemn eve a small waxen image of the Infant Jesus was placed by reverent hands. At midnight the Señora and her husband, bearing candles, and emulating the shepherds of Bethlehem, repaired to the stable, where they spent a prayerful hour. So much for the introduction to my story.

When I arrived once more at San Mauricio, again craving the Señora's hospitality, I was received with welcome, after my belongings had been placed in the same neat little room I had previously occupied. I then accompanied her to the garden, where she said she had something to show me. There I found two beautiful little boys, apparently about seven years old, making forts on a large pile of sand, which had evidently been placed there for their enjoyment.

"But what charming children!" I exclaimed. "Twins, are they not? And to whom do they belong, Señora?"

"Yes; they are twins," she replied, with a happy smile, "and they belong to me."

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"To you!" I replied. "But I thought—"

"Yes, yes," she answered. "You thought the truth—but now no longer. These are mine."

"The children of a relative?" I inquired.

"No, Señorita. It is not known by any one who were their parents. But the mother was good; that is certain. And God sent them to me and Rafael, so we have received them, and so we mean to rear them as our own. Come, Manuelo, and thou, too, Gaspare. Here is a great friend, a lady who wishes to make your acquaintance."

The children at once responded to the request, and in a moment we were all seated together making towers and bastions from the pile of sand.

"Manuelo," said the Señora after a while, "tell to the Señorita how you and Gaspare came to live here and be our children."

The boys looked at each other, Gaspare nestled close to his brother, and Manuelo began.

"We were all alone in the little hut, with mamma. We had walked *very, very* far, for days and days and days. Our feet were sore—we had no shoes, and mamma said, 'We will rest here in the empty house till our feet are better, and then we will come to a town, maybe, where I can get some work.'"

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"And where was your father?" I inquired.

"Our father was dead, Señorita," said the child. "Where we lived they had *virula* very bad, and mamma said, 'We will not stay here.'"

"And the people were good," interrupted Gaspare. "They gave us to eat, and put in a bag much bread and fruit for us."

"Yes," continued Manuelo. "On a stick—in the middle we carried that bag, Gasparito and I, at one end he, at the other I; and the bag in the middle. But when we came to the hut we could not walk any more. And when *our* feet were well, those of mamma were too tired. She could not get up. And then she told us beautiful stories, while she lay there, so sick and pale."

"Yes, beautiful stories of the Infant and the angels and the shepherds, and the wise, holy kings, till we could hear the songs, and see the brightly shining star."

"*Almost* we could hear and see those lovely things," Gaspare corrected Manuelo.

"We did hear what she sang for us, *Adestes fideles,* Manuelito."

"Yes, yes. That we did hear and will always remember."

"You see, Señorita, she was very good, that poor

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little mother," whispered the Señora. "No friend to take the children she left behind. Now tell, Manuelo, how you came to take the long, long walk."

"Yes, mamma," said the child thoughtfully, and a little sadly. "I will tell that. One morning, mamma said, '*Mis queridos,* after to-day I shall be with you no more. Go, when I can not answer if you call me, when my cheeks are cold and white, go back by the way we came. If you should go forward, as at first I meant to do, thinking that in the big city I should find some work to do, they will learn that you are alone, they will put you in a big house with many other boys and perhaps not with each other. I want that my two little boys who were born together should be always together. Go back by the same way and perhaps on some *ranch* or in some small *pueblo,* where the people have kind hearts, they will take care of you. As soon as I am in heaven, the very minute, I will pray for that.'"

"And you did what your mother asked?" I inquired.

"Yes, Señorita. The next morning when we awoke our mother was dead. We cried a good deal, and first I thought to tell some people in a house

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on the hill. So we went there, and the man said, 'We will come.' But Gaspare and I went by another way, and we walked and we walked. We were afraid, and had only to eat the dry bread that was left in the bag. It was two days and we came to San Mauricio. There was a big fire on the hill, and I remembered that mamma had said, 'Soon it will be Christmas Day. On the night before they make fires on the hills.' And said Gaspare to me, 'They will be good to us, maybe, for the love of the little Child Jesus who was born in a stable. Let us knock at some door and ask to eat and sleep.'"

"I was so tired," said Gaspare, looking at me apologetically with his large brown eyes.

"He is smaller than me," continued Manuelo, patting his brother's arm. "But I thought then, maybe better wait till morning. There was a little house near by—dark—I thought a stable. Inside there were no animals. We went in very softly, Gaspare and I, and the moon shone. And there, full of clean straw, was a big manger, and in the middle a beautiful wax baby. And Gaspare said—"

"Yes, I said," cried Gaspare, excitedly, "I said there is the manger all ready. We are so tired,

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Manuelito, let us creep in and sleep beside the Infant Jesus."

"At first I was afraid," rejoined Manuelo, "but then I was not, and we crept in and in one minute we were asleep. But before we put the Child Jesus between us, to take care of us, and we knew that mamma had prayed right away when she stepped into heaven."

"And there, Señorita," burst forth the Señora, as she cuddled a boy under each arm, "there we found them fast asleep, Rafael and I, when we came at midnight to pray in the stable before the manger. And after that what could we do? Turn away those blessed children sleeping in the very cradle of Our Lord? No; that we could *never* have done. There before us lay the Christmas gift we had always craved and prayed for—but which had always been denied us by the good God, because He knew that one day these darling children would be deprived of their parents, and would be hungry and cold and without any shelter but a stable, without any bed but a manger, like Him on the night of His birth. Was that not a miracle, Señorita? Was it not a Christmas gift straight from heaven?"

"So it seems to me," I replied.

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"And we know almost, Señorita, that the mother went to God at once, for there was the answer to her prayer, *pobrecita!* And there is, besides, another strange thing. They are called Manuelo and Gaspare—Emmanuel, the Saviour; Gaspare, one of the wise kings. Oh! it was God, the holy Infant. So we must always believe, Rafael and I."

* * * * *

And so thus far it has proven. The twins have grown to be strong, sturdy boys, industrious, cheerful and obedient, idolized by their kind foster-parents and esteemed by all who know them, beloved of man and God.

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AT THE CHRIST SHOP.

BY MARY F. NIXON-ROULET.

It was morning in Nazareth. Cool and sweet from the hills came the breath of the dawn, as the breeze rose up and told of the goodness of Jehovah in cooling the parched earth.

Blue was the sky, blue as a sapphire, and the white clouds which swept its azure were like drifts of snow upon the mountain-side. Flowers bloomed in glory along the roadside, snow lilies flecked with gold like the robe of Saba's queen; there were, too, the delicate flowering almond, the brave spikes of the gladiolus, the fragrant lotus lilies, red as heart's blood.

A group of lads wound down the village street, in their midst a slender boy, all lily-crowned, in his slim hand a reed, upon his face a look of majesty, in his mien a grace which well became the name his comrades gave. King, they hailed him joyously, and bade all who passed bow low unto him.

"For he is the head of all our boyish state, and king over all his kind in Nazareth," they cried.

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The boy smiled and said naught. Within his eyes lay deep a shadow, as if a cloud had drifted o'er the sun.

As the lads played together it came the noon hour, and all dispersed to their homes—all but the boy they had called king. He walked slowly, as one in a dream. As he walked he came to a dye-shop, and there he paused, attracted by the bright hues of the dyestuffs which lay in the windows. It was the shop of Salem, fairest dyer in Nazareth, whose vats were full to overflowing with rare goods of Tyrian purples and rich Indian blue.

The shop was empty and the boy king entered, gazing about with interest at the sight. Seeing a heap of garments to be dyed, he flung them into a vat of crimson dye. At that moment the dyer returned. Seeing the mischief wrought, he cried out:

"Child, why hast thou spoiled all my day's work? These garments are from the richest in Nazareth, and thou hast ruined them! They were to be dyed in different hues, and thou hast spoiled them! Thou hast made them all red as blood. What shall I do?" and he wrung his hands in despair.

But the boy answered,

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"Sir, I desired to help thee in thy work, and I have not spoiled thy wares. Tell me, what shade was this robe to be?" drawing, as he spoke, a magnificent garment from the vat.

"That is the robe of Silernus the Greek. It was to be dyed in Tyrian purple," said Salem, eyeing the crimson-stained garment with sorrow. But ere he finished sighing, lo! the cloth changed its hue, and glowed a royal purple before his astonished eyes.

"And what was this?" demanded the child. Salem stammered,

"Of Indian blue was that to be," and again was the strange thing accomplished, and the cloak became as blue as the sky above. And so it was with each piece that was thrown into the vat, until each one was the right shade.

"Never have mine old eyes beheld such a miracle!" cried Salem. "Wonder Child, who art thou?"

"Men call me Jesus. I am the son of Mary and of Joseph the carpenter, abiding in my father's house," was the reply.

"Thou hast not a new cloak, O son of Mary. I pray thee take this and dye it of a color to suit thyself," said old Salem, giving him a mantle of

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soft, yellow stuff, a great gift for him, since he was old and poor.

"I thank thee," said the gentle voice, as the child cast the mantle into the vat and drew it forth crimson. "I thank thee, Salem the Dyer. On Calvary shall my blood flow red as this cloak for thee. Farewell." And he passed from out the old man's wondering sight. And a bright light shone round about the room as Salem said:

"Of a truth mine eyes have seen a marvel, for within this place is the Splendor of God!"

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A GREAT TEMPTATION.

BY MAGDALEN ROCK.

ALICE MAHON looked pale and ill as she stood before the matron of the big Dublin hospital receiving her final instructions.

"I am sorry to send you out so soon after your last trying case," the latter said, "but there's not another nurse available at present. Take good care of yourself."

"Oh, I am all right," the girl replied hastily, and wondered at the sound of her own voice. "I have a headache, but it will pass away soon."

"You are really not fit to go out," the matron continued, "but some one can take your place in a few days. You have only just time to catch the train for the West. Good-by, nurse."

The nurse hastened to the waiting cab, and reached the station in time to be hoisted into a carriage by a civil porter. The train was already in motion, and the girl sank back into a corner before she noticed that the two seats at the other side of the compartment were occupied. Their

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occupants were two well-dressed young fellows deep in conversation. The train was not clear of the suburbs of the city when one of them spoke a name that arrested her attention.

"Guilty! Nonsense! Terry Bagwell commit a murder! The idea is preposterous!"

"The case looks black against him," the other man said. "I wonder you did not read about the affair, Egan."

Percy Egan shrugged his shoulders.

"I was too busy over my finals to read the papers, Jack. Whom has Terry been murdering?"

"It is no laughing matter, I assure you," Jack Leyburn replied. "He is accused of murdering his cousin, Richard Bagwell."

"Richard? Regular bad lot was Richard."

"No doubt. That won't help poor Terry, though. The case comes on at the next Assizes."

"What are the facts?"

"Well, Richard found out that Terry was paying attention—and with serious matrimonial intentions, too—to some undesirable person. He carried his information to old Luke Bagwell—"

"Terry's uncle?"

"And Richard's also. There was a big row,

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my folk say. Terry wouldn't promise to give up the girl, and his uncle sent him about his business. He took up quarters in the village public house, and the next morning Richard was found with a bullet in his heart. The bullet fitted a pistol belonging to Terry. He had been seen going in the direction in which the murdered man was found on the previous evening."

"Purely circumstantial evidence."

"So far."

"No jury would convict on it. It seems strange he was even returned for trial."

"Local feeling was strong against him, I expect," Jack Leyburn said; "but a young fellow who was strongly attached to Terry—one Paul Grimes—made out of the county at the time. He is supposed to have seen the deed done. The police were stupid, and it was not till recently that Paul was captured in some out-of-the-way corner of Donegal, where he was in hiding with friends. He will be, I understand, the most important witness against Terry."

"Witness or no witness, Terry isn't guilty. Why, man, I knew him at Blackrock, though he was a class or two ahead of me, and knew him well. I was a slow coach always, and Terry used

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to lend me a hand at my exercises. I should as soon believe myself guilty of murder as Terry," Egan said impetuously.

The girl in the corner murmured some inarticulate words. Leyburn turned toward her.

"Did you speak?" he asked.

"No—that is, you mentioned a name, Paul Grimes. I am going to nurse a Paul Grimes," the girl replied.

"Oh! Rather a coincidence, isn't it, Egan? I heard Grimes was ill, very ill. If he should shuffle off this mortal coil Terry would be safe."

"Why do you persist in regarding *him* as guilty?" the nurse asked with some warmth. Jack raised his eyebrows at the question.

"Oh, well," he said, a trifle apologetically, "I have only adopted the common opinion. And the accused man had a good deal of provocation."

"My friend, Jack Leyburn, is a member of the legal profession," Egan said, speaking for the first time. "Perhaps his drop of Scotch blood makes him regard each person accused of crime as guilty till proven innocent. Now I, Percy Egan, go on opposite lines."

After this informal introduction, some few remarks were exchanged between the occupants of

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the carriage; but in a little while the nurse closed her eyes, and the talk between the two men turned on political matters. When the train stopped at the little country station of Knockmore all three alighted. Egan was going to spend a few days at Leyburn's home; and the two men waited till they saw their fellow-traveler conducted by a burly constable to an outside car. Its driver was loquacious, evidently.

"Up you get, miss. You're going to the barracks, no less, to keep Paul Grimes in the land of the living, you and the doctors. He took suddenly bad there, and the doctors won't have him moved. He's an important man now, is poor Paul, since his evidence will hang Terry Bagwell. Well, miss, are you all right?"

"You see the way the wind blows," Jack Leyburn said, as he and his friend lifted their caps to their new acquaintance. "Poor Terry is evidently regarded as guilty. Good-by."

A drive of a quarter of an hour brought Alice to the door of a square, whitewashed building. In the room to which she was conducted two medical men, and a stout, fussy woman, were standing by the bed whereon Paul Grimes lay. The two doctors looked with some disappointment on

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the white-faced and evidently nervous girl in hospital uniform. The elder of the two spoke, first to his fellow-practitioner, then to Alice:

"Oh, she's all right—regularly qualified. I thought you were merely a probationer. Well, you have your work cut out for you, nurse. 'Tis touch and go with Grimes. Are you ready to take up nursing to-night?"

Alice bent her head.

"Then you can go, Mrs. Collins," the doctor said, and Mrs. Collins, with evident reluctance, took her departure. The medical men gave Alice her instructions, and the doctor who had first spoken said:

"The case lies chiefly in your hands, but there is little hope, almost none. The patient is to have the medicine every hour and a teaspoonful of brandy every two hours. If you can keep him alive for three days, he'll do probably; but I don't expect you can. Do you, Staples?"

Staples shook his head.

"No; and it is so important in the interests of justice. All lies in the nursing, as you say. It will be a regular hand-to-hand fight with death."

"Exactly," the other man said. "Now, nurse, you understand?"

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"I understand," Alice said briefly.

The doctors gave some further directions and took their departure. They agreed in considering the new nurse as incompetent as Mrs. Collins, who came back to the sick-room when they had gone to make arrangements for her supplanter's comfort. At length Alice was left alone. She sank into the chair Mrs. Collins had vacated and covered her face with her hands.

"I have ruined him—ruined Terry!" she moaned, half aloud. "Oh, he never did *it,* never, never; but they'll make out a case against him. Every one thinks so, and the evidence is so black."

The unconscious lad on the bed stirred, and she looked toward him with something like hatred on her face.

"Why should he live? Why should he live?" she thought bitterly. "The doctors do not expect he will—why should he?" She had only to neglect the instructions given her, to withhold the medicine and stimulants, and Terry would be safe, at least from the worst penalty of the law.

Two years before Terry Bagwell and Alice Mahon had met at a seaside resort during the latter's short annual holiday. The acquaintanceship between the two ripened into liking when

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they met again at a house where Alice was nursing one of the children, and the pair had become engaged. The news of this engagement had been conveyed by Richard Bagwell to the uncle, whose heir Terry was expected to be. Alice had read of the murder, and of her lover's accusation while engaged in nursing the "trying case" of which the hospital matron had spoken. She had returned to the hospital when death had released the patient so white and wan that nothing but urgent necessity made the matron send her as nurse to Paul Grimes.

The minute-hand of a small clock on the plastered wall of the room was approaching the hour at which the medicine was to be given to the sick lad. Alice watched it with wide-open eyes.

"I'll not give it. I'll not give the medicine, and *he* will die," she said, and rose to count out the drops from the medicine bottle with the intention of throwing them in the fire. "The doctors won't know; no one will—no one but God."

She stood still, shaking like an aspen leaf in the wind, while the minute hand of the clock drew nearer the appointed hour. Then with a low, agonized cry, she dropped on her knees.

"O God, help me!" she moaned. "O God,

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save me from being what they say Terry is! O God! O God!"

It seemed to her that an eternity passed while she knelt on the bare floor, writhing in agony. When she rose to her feet, however, her face was tranquil, and the hands that measured the medicine did not tremble. The victory was won. Paul Grimes should not die, if good nursing would save him.

When the doctors came next day they found the patient no worse. That was a distinct gain; and they looked at Alice and at each other, and Dr. Staples said:

"Well, nurse, we thought you rather a worthless person last night. I am glad to change my opinion."

"And I," his colleague added. "But, nurse, are you quite well?"

Alice nodded, and answered mechanically:

"Quite well."

"I hope so. There is plenty of work before you still," the doctor said; "and you are very pale."

For three days and nights Alice did her best for Paul Grimes, and finally the lad began to show signs of improvement. The two doctors

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were loud in praise of the nurse and her nursing; but on the fourth day Alice was recalled to Dublin, while another nurse took her place. It was while sitting one evening in the drawing-room of the house attached to the hospital that she took a letter from her pocket which had been handed to her on her arrival from work. It was from the nurse who had taken her place in Knockmore. After a few uninteresting sentences she read:

"You know our patient was supposed to be a witness to the murder of Richard Bagwell. He is the murderer! There, now, aren't you surprised? He is a really nice lad, and I suppose I shouldn't call him a murderer, seeing he had no intention of shooting Mr. Bagwell. He had taken the loan of one of Mr. Terence Bagwell's pistols, and was practising with it by shooting at twigs of trees when he most unfortunately struck Mr. Bagwell. The lad is a bit short-sighted. He was dreadfully frightened and made off to the north, where he has some relatives. He heard of the charge against Terence Bagwell, and confessed what he had done. Mr. Bagwell is to be released at once."

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When Alice read so far she immediately dropped the letter with a long, quivering sigh, and astonished the other occupants of the room by fainting. On the next day the doctor of the institution ordered her a holiday. Part of that holiday was passed under the roof of Luke Bagwell's home; and it was while stopping there that she and Terry chanced to meet the two young men with whom she had journeyed to Knockmore. Both tendered Terry their congratulations; and he and Egan walked on in front of Alice and Jack Leyburn.

"Oh, my uncle was sorry, really sorry for his part in the affair," Terry said. "It was he himself who invited Alice here. We are, and with his consent, to be married immediately."

Egan said congratulatory words, but added:

"Miss Mahon looks far from well."

"Naturally," Terry said, but his face clouded, and he thought of the night Alice had passed in the police barracks of Knockmore. The shadow was still on his face when Leyburn and Egan parted from them. Alice touched his arm.

"What is it, Terry?"

"Oh, my dear, my dear, I was thinking of that night, that dreadful night."

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"When I was tempted to let Paul—how glad I am that the jury said he was innocent!—drift into eternity?"

Terry nodded, and a moment later added:

"We will speak of it no more."

Alice smiled.

"But we will often thank God that He gave me strength to withstand a great temptation."

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THE BAMBINO IN THE STRAW.

BY MARION AMES TAGGART.

WHEN her husband's death ended abruptly, tragically, the brief year of her wedded bliss, they hoped that the touch of her baby's hands would recall Alice to life. Dr. Will Hibbard hoped it, watching her apathy with a physician's anxiety and a lover's tenderness. For Will had loved her since he, a great boy of twenty, had seen her, a child of ten, flit across his path in her bright lawns, with her hair floating out like a golden banner behind her, and she had fallen on the log convulsed with laughter when he tripped over it in a clumsy effort to catch her.

But ten years later she had loved his friend and married him, and the doctor had hidden the sorrow that was a very real one, and had accepted the rôle of trusted physician, which they had unsuspectingly accorded him. And now poor Bert was dead, suddenly called away from a life which held the best good possible, to the doctor's mind,

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and Alice sat torpid under the blow. He alone of all the world had power to help her. He performed his task with the fidelity of his twofold interest, with no thought of reward. And Alice lived.

The baby's tiny hands held her back from the brink of eternity, and for eleven months filled her renewed life with a brooding happiness that amazed her, who had thought all happiness buried in Bert's grave.

Then the baby sickened and died—died on Alice's knees as Dr. Hibbard bent over it, and the young widowed mother clutched him, frantically praying him for its life, as if he had power to give or to withhold, as if he would not cheerfully have given his own life to have purchased that of the little creature whom he could not save.

In this second bereavement Alice had lost her all. There was no hope coming this time to restore her, if they could but preserve her until its coming. She had lost all, and there seemed to be no way of reaching the benumbed soul that sat in the constant shadow of her two graves, no way of wrenching her from them into interest in the life around her.

"She is too young to die, Will," sobbed her

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mother. "Yet she will certainly die unless we can arouse her into interest. You love her, Will, dear; if only you could marry her and take her far away, and win her back to life by your love for her."

For Alice's mother had long been Will's confidant, and before Bert had come she had hoped he would be her son.

The doctor shook his head.

"Better a baby than I to arouse her," he said. "If we could get her to adopt a tiny creature to nestle in her arms—but I feel sure she would resent the suggestion."

She did resent it, as far as there was force left in her for resentment, when her mother tried to persuade her that her empty hands were for her filling, that she should give of her childlessness to the motherless. Alice, so tender, so loving-hearted, hardened her wan face at the suggestion, and the mother fell silent.

The doctor was wiser; he did not speak to her, but in all ways his love strongly, and ceaselessly surrounded the girl, and afar in her frozen north of sorrow Alice felt, and was grateful for, his goodness to her. It was she who spoke to him.

"You make me wish that I could, Will, dear,"

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she said one day unexpectedly. "That is more than I could have believed that I would say, for the source of all feeling is dried up in me. I have nothing to give you, not even gratitude worthy of the name. But I can see and wonder that you are so good to me."

"It is not goodness, Alice. I loved you years ago. Before Bert came I loved you. I shall love you all my life," he said simply.

And Alice gently touched his hand, troubled wonder in her eyes that any one could still feel. The doctor tried to find comfort in that slight stir of sympathy.

Christmas came toward the world again. They had laid the baby away among the swiftly falling splendor of October leaves. Alice's mother brought her work into Alice's room each day, hoping that on one of them her stricken girl might awaken to interest in the garments she was making for poor children, in the dolls she was dressing for those whom Santa Claus might forget in the stress of business among the more prosperous. Alice threaded needles, advised languidly, but showed no interest in her mother's work.

"She turns away her head when I talk of the children, Will; she is turning her face from life.

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Oh, what a Christmas this is!" cried the poor mother, hiding her face on Will's arm. To him alone she allowed her grief to be apparent.

"I have just come from grief, from a worse tragedy, in a way, than this," said the doctor, stroking the gray hair. "I have closed the eyes of a gently born, half-starved young mother, and I have almost forcibly opened to life the eyes of the little baby whom she has left behind. It was nearly gone. It seemed cruel to retain it in a world which held no home, no love for it."

The mother raised her head. "If only Alice—" she began, and stopped.

"For her sake and the sake of the friendless little morsel of humanity," supplemented the doctor.

Five days later was Christmas eve. Alice's depression had deepened with the approach of the feast. She had planned to be happy in spite of her widowhood, trimming her baby's first tree, and now there was no baby.

She sat silent by the fire in her room, growing weaker. It was plain that she must die for lack of desire to live. On the floor by the fire lay a loose pile of excelsior, left from her mother's packing of her poor children's toys, which the maid had

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not yet come up to remove. Feebly Alice recalled the straw in the churches laid that day for the waxen bambinos, and wondered when she would go back to see a crib again.

"Never, perhaps," she thought, and fell asleep.

She did not hear Dr. Will's step on the stairs, did not hear him enter her room so softly, did not know that he had crossed it with the step of a cat, bent an instant over the straw on the floor, and had tiptoed out again without awakening her.

When she opened her eyes it was dusk. The fire had burned low, but a faint red glow fell a few feet on each side of the hearth, throwing the rest of the room into deeper shadow. Alice's eyes rested on the glow with the sensation of comfort warmth brings to semiconsciousness, and then, as she more fully awakened, her pain aroused her to fresh poignancy for the refreshment of sleep.

Something white covered the little heap of straw. Alice looked at it intently. It moved. She sat erect, her heart beating. Something detached itself from the whiteness and stirred aimlessly. A baby's hand! Alice's heart stood still. She strained her eyes in the gathering darkness, and made out a baby's soft curves, its tiny limbs drawn up in the meaningless tangle of arms and

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legs which has, to a woman's heart, supreme meaning. One atom of a hand, set on its arm in a deep wrinkle that stood for a wrist, was thrust out over the edge of the straw as if imploring her to come.

Never for an instant did it occur to Alice that it was a human child. Out of pity for her loneliness, the Bambino of the churches had come to her, to her, too weak and suffering to go to Him. Or was she dead, and was this the gentle means by which she was to be ushered into bliss? It was a vision. She was too miserable to wonder that it was vouchsafed to her; she had been too long on the borderland between the worlds to marvel that the veil was raised. Her hungry heart could not resist that little hand. She drew herself to her feet, and went falteringly across the short space between her chair and the Bambino. She stood looking down upon the child, so little, so helpless. Thus had her boy lain when they gave him to her heart for its healing, the heart that bled for him now. Did not the divine Bambino know that His coming could not comfort her, not even His coming? Did He not know that these baby hands must tear her, fainting for the touch of a living child?

She stood looking down on him, and something

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icy that had bound her broke and melted in a great flood of tears. She shook from head to foot, and sobs tore her, but there was healing in her passion. And the baby opened his eyes, looking up at her, and sucking in his lip hungrily. The baby face twisted and the baby hands fluttered aimlessly, but Alice thought they were stretched to her, and the baby voice broke the stillness with a cry. Something leaped in Alice to that cry. Her motherhood awoke. If this were the divine Bambino, still He was cold and wanted her. Could a vision suck its little lips so hungrily, and could a vision pierce her heart with a human baby's cry?

She fell on her knees beside the straw, and fearfully touched the tiny body. Instantly her fingers lightly stroked his flesh, her hand curved to the baby's side with the maternal hollowing that is so essentially motherly. She gathered the baby to her, pressing the little head to the breast that ached so for her child, devouring with kisses the aimless hands, the dimpled elbows and knees, covering the tiny form with her own, low bent over him, raining tears upon him, crooning to him, melting to him in a frenzy of emotion that was both agony and rapture.

Later, Dr. Hibbard and her mother drew aside

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a portière and looked in upon Alice, holding each other fast lest they make a sound. They saw her with the sleeping baby wrapped in her own boy's blanket, held close to her heart, and her voice softly hummed the lullaby which had quickest soothed her baby to sleep. And on her face there rested a look of one spent by grief, but who had found peace.

"It has worked, our spell has worked, both for her and the motherless child!" whispered the doctor, as they crept back, letting the portière fall noiselessly behind them.

"Thank God! oh, thank God! for this Christmas gift of a child," sobbed the mother. "Ah, Will, dear Will, faithful, devoted, unselfish Will, if only she might live, not for me alone, but to bless you as you deserve to be blessed!"

"By and by, mother, maybe by and by. I can wait, and baby hands work miracles. I am satisfied with one miracle for this Christmas. But if she lives—and that is assured us now—I shall hope! By and by, dear mother of Alice, by and by!"

The doctor's eyes were full of joy, and alight with the light of prophecy. Alice's mother turned her own upon him with love and gratitude.

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"The dead mother of the little child and Alice's mother will pray for you that you have the full measure of your deserts, dear Will. God listens when mothers pray. I believe Alice will live to love you as you deserve," she said.

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THE ROMANCE OF A HARLEM FLAT.

BY MARION AMES TAGGART.

Miss Rosina Bates had taken her old black skirt into the kitchen to rip it because the light was good there. In the parlor the threads would get on the carpet. There was a rocking-chair in the kitchen, and the setting sun came in on the bias, so to speak, at the windows. Mufftee, the yellow cat, purred beside the gas range, accommodating himself to modern flat life in its substitute for a hearthstone, as he accommodated himself to the fire-escape in lieu of green grass and trees.

Miss Rosina and Mufftee were a little alike in coloring; both had yellow hair, greenish yellow eyes, and were very white where they were white.

Miss Rosina had a slender income and not enough ambition to increase it. She preferred living within it, in a fashion most people would have found depressing, to taking her place in the

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world's fierce competition in order to increase it. Not Charles Lamb himself was more completely urban than this shrinking little woman. She loved to tread on pavements, to watch the varied sorts of life New York includes, to absorb through eyes and pores the stimulus of its contact, herself in nowise part of it, except as a spectator. So she lived up four flights in a tiny flat in Harlem, her bell and speaking tube the topmost of the five on the left of the front door, prepared her own meals, and kept her little nest spotlessly clean; alone, save for Mufftee, and very content, indeed, because nature had made her a cheery little body.

On this afternoon she was in a tremendous hurry with her ripping; having put it off for two weeks, she now felt, with feminine insistence, that it would be unbearable if it were not finished before the light faded from her windows. She had ordered home her marketing that morning, so there seemed no possibility that the sharply insistent whistle which summoned her to her dumb waiter, and which was the one thing in her tiny establishment which she cordially detested, could blow to call her from her work. Miss Rosina sang as she ripped, and Mufftee purred, she with

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increasing volume, he more sleepily and less audibly every moment.

Suddenly a furious blast on the whistle, its mouth close to Miss Rosina's ear, brought her to her feet with a shrill little scream.

"Mercy upon us!" she cried angrily. "I never should get used to that whistle if I lived here ninety-nine years! Well, what is it?" she demanded, opening the waiter door.

"Here's your groc'ries," came a voice from below, with the unspellable accent of New York's east side.

"No; they're not mine," said Miss Rosina.

"Ain't you de top floor?" insisted the invisible youth.

"Yes; but they are *not* my groceries," replied Miss Rosina.

"Didn't you order nothin' from Baumgarten's?"

"No."

"Ain't your name von Seldeneck?"

"No. The other side; right hand top whistle." And Miss Rosina, having closed the door with slightly impressed emphasis, returned to her ripping.

Mufftee settled down again, having sat up to

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see what was arriving, though he knew quite well that this was not the butcher boy's whistle, and Miss Rosina took up her skirt again and her pleasant crooning. Presently a second blast on the whistle brought her to her feet again with her former shock repeated.

"Well?" she called down the cavernous depths of the dumb-waiter shaft.

"Apples? Ten cents a pail, lady," floated up in a whining voice from these depths.

Miss Rosina did not answer, but shut the door vehemently. She was opposed on principle to street venders because of their horrid cries, swelling heavily the list of nerve-wrecking city noises, and because of their inferior goods. It was maddening to be interrupted by one of these fellows!

Once more Miss Rosina gathered up the breadths of her skirt and took up her little knife to separate them. This time she did not sing, but Mufftee purred and blinked his eyes like an Eastern god, setting her the example of irrefragable patience. When the whistle blew a third time Miss Rosina was less startled but more angry than ever before. Her pleasant face was grim as she leaned over the ledge of the dumb-waiter shaft, demanding: "What *do* you want?"

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"Laundry. Sixty-six cents. And he says he didn't tear that shirt, nor yet ink that cuff. They was tore and inked when you sent 'em." And the owner of the shrill, boyish voice which had delivered this message began pulling up the dumb-waiter with confident haste.

"Stop!" cried Miss Rosina. "It isn't my laundry." But her voice was drowned by the rattle of the ropes, and the dumb-waiter continued mounting to her.

"This isn't mine," she called, when she could make herself heard.

"Top floor," insisted the boy laconically.

"Yes, but it's the other side; blow the right hand whistle. This package is marked von Seldeneck," cried poor Miss Rosina, and she heard the boy mutter: "Why didn't ye say so first off?" as she closed the door.

Miss Rosina managed to get her skirt apart with no further interruptions, and had reached the lining before her whistle blew for the fourth time. When this happened she cried aloud to Mufftee: "I positively will not stand this!" and threw the door open, speechless with indignation.

"Von Seldeneck?" came up a suave voice from below. "I have a case here of Double Horn Uni-

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corn Spring Water I should like to leave with you to try. Perfectly free, you know. They'd like to have your endorsement if you use it."

"This is not von Seldeneck. This is Bates, and I don't care for water," said Miss Rosina, not realizing how dubious this statement sounded.

"It has been sent to you personally, Mrs. von Seldeneck, or to your husband, my dear madam. Kindly ask him to test it, and let us have his endorsement if he approves it. Your husband has been spoken to by our concern, madam. If you will please deliver this message he will gratify us, I am certain."

To Miss Rosina's horror the door opposite hers on the dumb waiter shaft also opened, and a tall, spectacled man—unmistakably Teutonic—appeared before her blushing face.

"You have blown the wrong whistle, my friend," he said in a booming voice, kindly but assertative, as he bent in the direction of the source of the Double Horn Unicorn Water. "I will try that water, analyze it, and let your house know what I find it—I haf given my promise already. Send it up. Now, madam, I apologize that these people whistle to you so much. I haf put up a card over my whistle, but it does no good, for all my name

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is so long and yours so little. Maybe they think it is easier to blow a whistle with a short name than one with a long one." And Miss Bates' big neighbor laughed like a merry oboe.

"It is very annoying, but you are not to blame for their stupidity," returned Miss Rosina, feeling her annoyance quickly melting in the warmth of the heartiness opposite to her.

"It would be a happier worldt if peoples were not so dumb," observed the big German cheerfully, as he lifted the gallon jug of Double Horn Unicorn from the waiter.

Miss Rosina found herself speculating upon this new neighbor with amazing frequency after this glimpse of him. There was something in his size and resonant voice that dominated the lonely little woman's thoughts to a degree that seemed to her almost indecorous when she realized it. Nevertheless, she learned from the janitor that he was a scientific man attached in some capacity to a neighboring college, that his learning and instruments were equally impressive, and that he was in all ways that perfect tenant vaunted by janitors to other tenants with the effect of properly reducing them to a sense of their own inferiority.

Miss Rosina began to find herself the recipient

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of small favors which brightened her life, not only by their intrinsic properties in brightening power, but for the charm of romance and variety which they shed over her secluded and uneventful days. Magazines dropped over her doorsill when she opened the door, against which they had been propped. Flowers occasionally—more rarely—dangled on the mouth of the speaking tube over her letterbox in the vestibule. Once a curiously carved leather collar lay under her mail when she opened the box after the postman had summoned her by his morning ring. It was wrapped around with a sheet of paper, on which was written in the fine hand of a student: "For the beautiful golden cat, who will pardon the liberty. From his lonely and catless Neighbor."

"I have read that only men of artistic temperament and fine susceptibilities appreciate cats," observed Miss Rosina to the approving Mufftee. She herself approved this offering to her "fireside sphinx" to the highest possible extent.

One dire day Mufftee fell from the fire-escape to the cruel pavement of the yard below. He proved the fallacy of the superstition that cats are lucky by being picked up and brought to his stricken mistress with one golden leg hanging limp.

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"Chloroform is the only thing. You've got to kill him, miss," said the janitor, who looked unmoved on the suffering creature.

"You shall do nothing of the kind," said the booming voice Miss Rosina knew. She looked up appealingly to see her neighbor who, unbidden, had followed the janitor through the open door, having been a witness of poor Mufftee's disaster.

"I will set that leg, and he shall be as good as new, except a little stiffer. Trust me, mademoiselle; I haf studied medicine."

With entire confidence Miss Rosina yielded up Mufftee on the pillow to his visible providence. She helped valiantly in the preparation of the splints the professor improvised, and wound the bandages under his directions, steeling her heart against Mufftee's piteous mews for the sake of the ultimate good. And, thanks to Professor von Seldeneck's prompt rescue, Mufftee lived to illumine Miss Rosina's little flat with his sun-hued beauty.

"At thirty-two one may claim something from Mrs. Grundy; there is no reason why one should receive only the penalties of the years," argued Miss Rosina with herself, when the professor asked permission to visit her after Mufftee's complete re-

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covery deprived him of his office of attendant surgeon.

But the professor left her no opportunity to debate her future attitude toward him. Justly considering that his daily exercise of his office as an unauthorized agent of the S. P. C. A. had placed him well within the boundaries of a conventional acquaintance, he suddenly blossomed into a lover, and wooed Miss Rosina with all the sentiment of his race, all the ardor of a tardy passion. To Miss Rosina also it came as her maiden experience of love. The fifth floor west of the little Harlem flat was one with the Garden of Eden, for in it the man was finding the woman who was the integral part of himself, and who revealed to him a lack of which he had not been conscious, and she, newly-born to the meaning of life, found in him that meaning.

There was but one thorn in the flesh to mar the peace of the idyl enacting in this modern Eden where land was too precious to allow of the garden, and where a fifth floor flat was the setting for the old, old story, and this drawback was the insistent whistle. It still summoned Miss Rosina instead of the professor, interrupting conversations made up of eloquent silences, in which the declaration

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for which the modern Eve tremblingly awaited was frightened from the lips of this Teutonic Adam by its shrill call.

"It was for you, professor," said Miss Rosina one afternoon, returning with wearied patience from her fourth trip out through the telescopic rooms to the dumb waiter.

"We shall end it. We shall have one name and one vistle!" declared the professor, suddenly losing his hold on his English accent as he gathered and held the little woman in his arms. "Married, there vill be but one name, und that is von Seldeneck—mine," he announced, forgetting the romantic ways in which he had planned at various times to declare his love. "Ach, himmel, wie schön that is to be!"

Miss Rosina shut her eyes to see more clearly the beauty he prophesied. She saw it, and the joy in her face wiped out a third of the years which she had lived.

And thus ended, or rather began, the romance of a Harlem flat.

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THE GOOD, RED EARTH.

BY ANNA T. SADLIER.

ABBY WELLS had retired in disgust from city life. She had found it too strenuous, and as she was well-nigh thirty years of age she had given up hope of settling herself matrimonially. She put her savings into the purchase of a small cottage in the country and a couple of acres of ground. She meant to do such farming there upon a miniature scale as might be attempted by a woman—to grow fruit and vegetables and to raise poultry. To her friends, who remonstrated against the rashness of the venture, she declared that she was perfectly confident she could make a living for herself out of the good, red earth.

And she might have realized her ambition but for a certain untoward circumstance. Her farm adjoined another, and, as often happens in country districts, a strip of land where the properties joined was claimed by both parties. The feud was a long-standing one, but the previous owner of the farm had included this land in the sale to

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Abby, as though it was really his, despite the strenuous protestations of the neighbor. Abby, having purchased in good faith, and having an obstinate will of her own, was indisposed to admit that opposing claim. The piece of ground chanced to be particularly desirable. It had a spring, it was fertile—whatsoever was planted there grew rapidly—it had a sunny exposure, and, to crown all, a delightful view. Abby not only asserted a vigorous claim to this bit of the farm, but set about preparing to utilize it. She determined to grow fruit there, to add to the fruit-trees already planted, and to supplement them by currant and raspberry bushes. She hoped, in the course of a few years, to realize handsomely upon her expenditure. She made it her custom, moreover, to proceed thither every evening and enjoy the view, seated usually upon a great boulder of rock, which served as a boundary between that and her neighbor's possessions. It was the highest point of the land and the view was glorious, over wide meadows and downward into a valley watered by more than one stream. She found this a relief from the quietude of the house, where only the presence of her old nurse disturbed the absolute solitude.

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Hostilities from next door began with a letter which fell as a bombshell upon her plans and projects. She was warned off the disputed ground, forbidden to till or to plant, or even to trespass there. Thence sprang a voluminous correspondence. Abby, who was reticent of speech and decidedly mild-mannered, penned page after page of argument and remonstrance, which gradually, it must be owned, became abusive and vituperative. The replies were couched in a bold, strong calligraphy, and were concise and to the point. Abby declared to her sole confidant, the nurse, that they were aggressive and dictatorial. She made a few disheartened and dispirited attempts by day to proceed with her planting, with a view to asserting her rights, and at evening, all the summer through, she took her station upon the boulder, at sunset time usually. She brought her book, but she no longer enjoyed either its perusal or the delights of the landscape. She had an uneasy fear of being watched by malignant eyes and of some disagreeable interruption to the solitude.

The controversy meanwhile grew hotter and hotter upon paper, so that Abby, who did not dare to plant in the forbidden ground and merely made a pretense of having work done there, frequently

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spent the sunset hour in looking over her shoulder for the village constable to eject her as a trespasser. Despite her brave words on paper, she had a wholesome fear of her neighbor, whom she pictured to herself as bullying and aggressive. He, on his part, regarded Abby as the worst virago with whom a man had ever had to deal, and cited to himself certain portions of her letters in support of his contention. Sometimes as he read his cheek flushed, and he only wished that it were a man who had penned the document.

Every evening he stood at the door of his house, which was at a considerable distance from the adjoining farm, and peered cautiously thence at the prim, erect figure, which he could just see seated upon the boulder and outlined against the sky. He had no idea of what she was actually like, but he pictured her as gaunt and rawboned, with a hard, masculine face and a rasping voice.

* * * * *

At last the nights grew cold, the gorgeous colorings of gold and crimson began to die out of the skies, the meadows lay brown and sere, bereft of their golden wealth of grain, and Abby was forced to forsake the boulder and remain by the fireside. After that her neighbor felt a vague

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disquiet, a sense of loss and loneliness when he no longer descried that figure outlined against the evening sky. In the new restlessness which seized upon him, he wandered one autumn morning in the direction of the disputed territory. He had usually avoided the place in terror of a wordy combat with an opponent of the female sex, which he most of all dreaded. But now he felt a desire to see the place and—yes, to catch one real glimpse of his fiery correspondent. He approached very cautiously and with considerable trepidation. Abby was there with her skirts tucked up, busily hoeing out stones which might obstruct the growth of that crop which she had not as yet dared to plant. She did not hear her neighbor approach. She was all intent upon her work, a very pretty color in her cheeks, her lips scarlet, her eyes bright, and a few tresses of her firmly brushed hair escaping into curls upon her forehead. The neighbor stood and stared. Instead of the six feet of gaunt womanhood he had expected, here was a figure under the medium height, which to his own great proportions seemed diminutive. And how pretty she was, and how obstinately was she persevering in her futile labors upon the land!

Suddenly Abby turned and saw a man at

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least six feet high, broad shouldered and muscular; intuitively she knew it was her neighbor. He was intently regarding her from the shadow of his slouch hat, and he carried a gun in his hand with which he had been duck-shooting. Abby, looking, began to tremble all over. She cast a hasty glance of appeal into his face and tried to frame some words, then, overcome by a fright which was apparent in every movement, she turned and fled. She never ceased running till she reached the farmhouse, fearing to be pursued or to have a shot fired after her.

When she found she was safe in her own rocking chair she began to cry, and then she flamed up into fierce wrath against her neighbor, and indulged in the most uncomplimentary epithets she could devise.

The neighbor, on his part, had been so startled by her appearance, and so completely dumfounded, as he said, that it took him some time to realize that he had nearly frightened the little woman out of her wits.

* * * * *

During the long days of winter that followed, the correspondence on Abby's part waxed still hotter and more abusive. A new and subtle an-

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tagonism against her neighbor had developed since that day when he had so suddenly appeared. She recalled sometimes the expression with which the big man had been regarding her. It could scarcely have been called fierce. Nevertheless, she referred in the most scathing terms to his presence there on that occasion, and his deliberate purpose of scaring her away with a gun. From that time on, however, the neighbor's letters were gradually milder, till they were merely a faint protesting of his right to the ownership of the land, and a much more eager defense of himself against the charges she made. It was curious to see the big man, seated close to the lamp in the great, comfortable kitchen of his homestead, smoothing out Abby's letters and reading them over and over again. When they were particularly fierce he looked hurt for a moment, and then he smiled and recalled her just as she had appeared, hoe in hand.

At last Abby's letters suddenly ceased, and the neighbor felt a real pang of loneliness. He was seized with a discontent of his surroundings. He made efforts to find out what was the cause of the discontinuance of Abby's correspondence, but somehow or other he did not succeed. He made strenuous attempts to draw forth replies by writ-

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ing innumerable letters, some of which became very beseeching indeed in begging for an answer. The truth was Abby had fallen ill, and had been in bed for many weeks with an attack of pleurisy.

* * * * *

It was quite late in the spring when the invalid ventured forth and was able to walk as far as the disputed territory. She had lost heart considerably in the affair, and she had also begun to apprehend that what with one circumstance and another, her hopes of gaining a livelihood out of the good, red earth had waned and grown dim. The problem would have to be faced, in what other manner she might add to her resources, once the present scanty pittance upon which she lived was exhausted. As a last, desperate venture with regard to the strip of land, she had sent her neighbor a lawyer's letter. Better that the matter should be decided one way or another and at once.

It was an exquisite day. Spring reigned supreme in the air, the earth emitted a warm, delightful odor, the trees were sending forth buds, green things were growing in every direction. A vital current was rousing all things to life and sending new hope and joy into the human heart. Despite her anxieties, Abby was not insensible to

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this influence. She felt as if she had grown young again, and instead of twenty-nine was sweet nineteen.

All at once, as she stood there surveying the ground which she had had dug up by an Italian laborer who chanced to pass, she was aware of the approach of some one. That some one she was certain must be her neighbor. She did not fear him any longer, but what was this new feeling that set her heart beating and her pulses tingling, and made her remember those petitions which he had put into his last letters for a speedy answer.

She turned, however, and faced him. There he was upon the other side of the boulder, upon which he leaned his arms. He was clad in a rough and ready suit of tweed, showing his fine figure to advantage. He took off his slouch hat as she turned, and displayed the close-cut brown hair with its obstinate determination to curl, and she met his dark eyes that had something of the honesty and directness of a dog in their glance. They had something else, too, in their depths, which caused Abby to color swiftly, and to turn away her glance.

"I got your lawyer's letter," the neighbor began, slowly; that's all right, though I do think

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it's a pity for us to go on fighting about this bit of land."

Abby gazed at him defiantly, with a little flash of triumph.

"Oh," she said, "you are afraid, are you?"

The young man shook his head.

"No," he answered. "I ain't easily frightened. I'm good for a fight in a court of law, or anywhere else for the matter of that."

He stopped and looked upward. A wild bird was sounding its strange, sweet notes overhead. The good, red earth was sending forth its rich, moist smell where Abby had had it dug upon the disputed territory.

"You've been digging, I see—which is clean contrary to justice, since the land is mine; but," he stooped and, stretching out his arm, picked up a bit of the clay, "why should two human beings quarrel about the very earth given them by their Creator?"

He raised his hat reverently as he spoke. Abby's heart gave a leap, while her neighbor continued, in a lower tone:

"There's a way of settling it out of court that's satisfactory to me, anyhow."

"What way?" asked Abby, strangely fluttered

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and unable to find any of the words which had come so glibly to her pen.

The young man cleared his throat.

"This land's been a long time in dispute. It might as well be settled."

"But what way?" persisted Abby.

The neighbor looked at her.

"I was in hopes maybe you could guess," he observed. "Supposing we were to get married?"

The color flamed into Abby's cheeks, which had been pale since her illness, and her eyes sought the good, red earth in a confusion which was strangely mixed with gladness.

"You can hear about me down to the priest's. My character's all right. I've got a good bit of land, a house that's a great sight too big for a bachelor, and a little pile in the bank."

Abby made no response, and encouraged perhaps by her silence, or by that something in her face which was not repellant, the neighbor continued:

"I've liked you real well ever since I saw your face that day when you were hoeing. You looked mighty pretty, I can tell you, and—maybe you didn't mean just all you said in your letters."

Abby, to whom speech never came readily, felt as if her tongue were glued to the roof of her

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mouth. As she had been eloquent upon paper, so now it was the neighbor's turn to be eloquent in speech.

"I guess you'd make more out of your land if you had my help," the young man added, with a twinkle in his eye. "Anyway, I've got enough for two, and a good sight more. I like you better, I guess, than I ever liked any one. So, come, own up, Abby, that you didn't mean all you said in your letters."

A smile was softening the curves of Abby's mouth; her eyes were very soft and sweet in their expression. The neighbor's heart thumped loudly against the rock while he waited for her answer.

"I'd like to see the claim settled," Abby said demurely. "I'm mighty fond of this bit of earth."

"Couldn't you manage to get a little mite fond of me?" the neighbor suggested.

Abby pondered, the smiles deepening, the color flickering bewitchingly in her cheeks and the softness growing in the eyes that were now downcast.

"I guess I could get to like you some!" she confessed. Then a great shyness fell upon them both and a great light of happiness shone in their faces. The life-giving joy of the spring seemed to pervade them.

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"May I tell the priest to call our banns in a fortnight?" whispered the neighbor, and Abby made no objection.

In the years that followed, seated over her sewing in the big, farmhouse kitchen, Abby used to say to her friends, with a quiet laugh:

"One thing I've got out of the good, red earth —a husband, and a mighty fine one, too."

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MRS. O'MERA'S MISTAKE.

BY MAGDALEN ROCK.

MRS. O'MERA was alone in the drawing-room of Carrickmore—otherwise she would not have allowed the very decided frown to appear on her handsome face, nor would she have stamped a large and well-shaped foot.

"Why on earth did Rose invite young Lestrange here! He hasn't a penny—and there are Molly and he meandering down the avenue like a pair of fools. Had I known, I would have remained in Dublin, dreary as Christmas there is."

The frown faded from the lady's face as the door of the room opened. She turned with a smile to speak to her cousin, Mrs. Moore:

"I have just been watching Molly and that young fellow Lestrange going off to skate. I am afraid—"

"Oh, the pond is perfectly safe," Mrs. Moore interrupted. She was impetuous and rather given to interrupting people. "They can't do worse

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than wet their feet; so you may make your mind easy, Kate."

Mrs. O'Mera laughed pleasantly.

"I wasn't thinking of the skating. The pair will fall in love with each other."

"Well?"

"Oh, my dear, it would not do at all."

"No? Ted and Molly make a very nice couple indeed."

"But he's poor as a church mouse."

"Hardly. His bit of an estate (he farms it all, you know) isn't very productive I'm afraid; still, poorer people than Ted marry."

"Oh, yes, of course; but Molly is an expensive little creature. She couldn't manage on a limited income."

"Molly extravagant!" Mrs. Moore laughed. "Why, I thought her very much the reverse, and attributed it to her training at the convent."

"She seems not to be; but she is. She has no idea of the value of money."

"She's better wanting it," Mrs. Moore said. "She seems a nice, simple, unaffected girl, and Ted's a good fellow." She laughed. "I like to see a match of that sort."

"Nonsense!" Mrs. O'Mera lost some of her

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habitual calm. "Don't be absurd, Rose. Molly must marry a wealthy man. She'd only be wretched if she didn't."

"She might be wretched in the other case, too," Mrs. Moore remarked placidly. "Now, I must go to the kitchen and see the cook. Are you going out? Every one has gone skating, even my lazy husband."

Mrs. O'Mera wasn't venturing outside. She had a rather delicate chest, she said, and besides she couldn't keep beside Molly while Molly was skating. She went up to her room instead, in a state of mind that was not very charitable.

"Rose is a fool," she thought, bitterly. "If this Lestrange is going to stay on I must make an excuse to leave. What shall it be?"

Mrs. O'Mera, the widow of a not very successful medical man, could scarcely plead business of any kind.

"It must be toothache. I shall have to visit a dentist, and once in Dublin it will seem natural enough to remain. Good morning, Bessie."

The last observation was spoken aloud to a maid who was trying to make something of the letter and envelope in her hand. Mrs. O'Mera was rather a favorite with the servants of any house

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she visited. She knew the value of a few kindly words, and never missed the chance of gaining good-will when it cost nothing but words.

"Good morning, ma'am," Bessie replied, and she tendered the lady the papers she held. "I swept these out of some of the rooms, and I can't make out which—I can't read writing. I don't want to bother the mistress, so maybe you'll look at them?"

Mrs. O'Mera did so. The envelope was addressed to Mr. Edward Lestrange. It bore the postmark of New York. The letter was dated from that city, and began:

"My Dear Nephew:

"I am glad to hear you are thinking of settling down in life. Every man that means to marry should marry young. I was too busy when a young man to think of marriage. I gathered together a large fortune, and now, though my signature is good for half a million dollars, I am as homeless as a beggar on the street. This fortune will be yours; I have no other relative, and I should—"

So far Mrs. O'Mera read, forgetful of Bessie's

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gaze. With a little ejaculation she turned to the last page. It was signed Anthony Devlin.

"Yes, yes," Mrs. O'Mera said hastily, handing Bessie the sheet of paper and envelope. "These belong to Mr. Lestrange."

"Thank you, ma'am," Bessie said. "I'll just put them on the dressing-table." Mrs. O'Mera nodded and smiled, asked Bessie some question regarding herself, but never heard a word of the voluble answer given. She smiled, however, and that satisfied Bessie.

"What a very, *very* fortunate thing!" Mrs. O'Mera thought when in her own room. "Half a million dollars!" She did a sum in arithmetic and ejaculated: "How exceedingly fortunate!"

Mrs. Moore was rather annoyed when she found that all the skaters had returned save Ted Lestrange and Molly O'Mera. She was just a little afraid of Mrs. O'Mera, and glanced frequently and apprehensively at that lady, who seemed to be enjoying her well-creamed tea and cake.

"One can never trust Kate's looks," she took an opportunity of whispering to her husband. "She is dreadfully angry, I know. You might go and tell Ted and Molly to hurry."

"I'll do nothing of the kind," Mr. Moore said

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very decisively, and Mrs. Moore, after trying to make a cutting reply to her husband, went back to the tea table. The tea was no better than dish water when the two laggards came in.

"They have done it!" Mrs. Moore groaned. "Ted has asked her to marry him and she has consented," she confided to her husband. "Look at Ted's idiotic simper and Molly's cheeks! O dear! Kate will be unpleasant."

"Let her!" Mr. Moore observed, manlike. "If the pair wish to marry, why should you try to prevent them?"

"She's sure to think I should. O dear, there is bother in everything!"

Mrs. Moore prepared herself for a bad time. She was therefore not a little surprised to see Mrs. O'Mera beaming on the delinquents. She was still more astonished when, later, that lady smilingly informed her of Molly's engagement to Ted.

"But I thought you said it wouldn't do," Mrs. Moore remarked, perplexedly.

"I don't think I said that exactly; but I was impressed by what you said, Rose."

Mrs. Moore wondered vaguely how she had been impressive.

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"And, of course, Molly's happiness is my first consideration," Mrs. O'Mera continued. "She is very fond of—Ted."

"Oh!"

The evening passed pleasantly away. So, too, did the next day till the dinner-hour, when the conversation turned on millionaires.

"There's an old friend of mine who will be a wealthy man one of these days," said Ted. "His name is Jim Nealon. He has an uncle in New York who is worth a pile of money, and Jim is his only relative."

Mrs. O'Mera let her fork fall.

"What is his name—the uncle's name?" she inquired, hastily.

"His name! I really forget. Jim is a horse dealer, you know, without settled place of abode, so he asked his relative to send all letters to me. I have the letter I got last from the uncle somewhere or other." Ted searched his pockets. "Here it is. The man's name is Anthony Devlin. Jim is somewhere in Galway—I don't know the exact address. However, he will be at my place in a day or two."

Mrs. O'Mera managed to get through dinner without showing any signs of her discomfiture,

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but Molly found her exceedingly irritable the next few days. There was, unfortunately, nothing to be done, the elder lady reasoned, but to allow the marriage to proceed, and if Ted and Molly have not a sufficiency of wealth they have of happiness.

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THOMAS CASABIANCA.

BY MARION AMES TAGGART.

MOLLY accepted Tom, as every one said that she would. He was her first lover—Molly was very young—their fathers were friends, and Tom, who was quite old enough to know precisely what he wanted, laid such violent siege to her that she capitulated in a dizzy way before she had made up her mind that she wanted to marry any one, or whether her feeling for Tom was "friendship, love, indifference, or hate," as she had said when she counted her apple seeds for an augury. This was in school, when the girls named her apples. Molly had been out of school only a year when she accepted Tom.

The result of Tom's victory was that his pride and delight in it were short lived. For Molly's self-questioning and doubts began in less than a week, and the high-handed methods which had swept the girl from her defenses did not suffice to keep her a satisfied captive. It was not long before Molly's doubts degenerated into sheer ner-

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vousness, a state of body and mind in which her engagement was impossible, Tom's presence unbearable.

"You'll have to give me back my promise," she cried fretfully. "It is dreadful, wicked, monstrous to think that I have made it without knowing my own mind, but it was really your fault, Thomas Riding! You made me say something quick, and I said yes!"

"That's no quicker than no, Molly," said Tom placidly. "Not that I am finding fault. I intended you to say yes; I even preferred that you should say yes! Now what am I to give you back? That little stirring of the air that was your yes can't be undone. As to knowing your mind, little Molly, mind has nothing to do with it. Love is not a mental performance, like finding how many square feet there are in an acre, for instance. I don't love you with my mind—not directly—I love you with the *me* of me; that's the way you love me—only you don't know it! You've got nervous, Molly darling. It's fidgetiness, scrupulous fidgetiness! It doesn't worry me. 'Oh, I love you, Molly darling!'"

And Tom sang the first line of the old song, looking calmly into Molly's flushed face.

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"Tom, you are maddening!" the girl cried. "How can you be so trifling? Do you think a solemn promise of marriage is nothing? Is it nothing that I should have made a mistake?"

"It would be a very serious matter if you did make a mistake—that's why I don't intend to let you give me up," retorted Tom, with his cheerful and reassuring smile.

"It's not a question of what you let me do," cried Molly, tears of helpless wrath rising in her eyes. "I take back my promise, Tom. I'm sorry, but I can not marry you."

"Not to-day, Molly darling," smiled Tom, "but later. I'll tell you, Molly, how we'll settle it: You may take back your promise to me—I can't very well help it if you insist, and it will probably settle your mind to do so, like an egg in coffee. But I won't take back my promise to you; my mind doesn't need settling in the least. It will be a comfortable and wholesome arrangement all 'round. Nothing will be much altered by it, for of course a man takes out the girl he is engaged to, goes to see her and all that, so nothing will be different just because you are not engaged to me—for a little while. See? And by-and-by you will be thankful that I kept my balance while you were

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so unsettled, for you do love me, little Molly, only just now you are wire-hung, and wire-hung things are jiggly. You ought to get a tonic; you are nervous. I believe they give asafetida for nervousness, but it isn't positively attractive."

"Tom, you are enough to drive a girl stark mad!" cried Molly. "Here am I nearly heart-broken over this miserable mistake, and I have cried, and thought, and—and prayed over it, and now, when I am trying to deal honestly with you, and have nerved myself to tell you the truth, and have broken our engagement, you—you jest, you refuse to be serious, and—and are—you are beyond all comprehension of endurance!"

"Dear, you are mistaken. I'm not a hair-breadth beyond comprehension. It's very simple. I love you and I don't mean to lose you. That's all, Molly," said Tom, with an earnestness that should have satisfied Molly, but which did not seem to do so. "Very well, then; have your way. Your engagement is broken. It's only half an engagement. I'll come around to-night to take you to the Philharmonic."

But when Tom came Molly was not only not ready to go with him, but she was not visible, and when, after repeated attempts to fulfil his part of

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the engagement, Tom found that his little lady remained obdurate, he was obliged to admit to himself that a one-sided engagement was not the same thing as a twofold one, and not nearly as satisfactory. For Molly resolutely held to her determination to claim more time for the making up of her indeterminate little mind, and Tom, deprived of the companionship which had been his chief delight from boyhood, had to fall back on such cold comfort as he could glean from the fact that at least that mind was not made up to a definite rejection of him, and that at times he thought that he caught the glimmer of wistfulness in the soft eyes, which now, alas! looked into his only on casual meetings by the way, or in church.

Molly herself was far from happy in the chaotic condition of her affairs and of her mental attitude. She worried so, wanting Tom with all her might, yet not wanting a husband, that she grew thinner and paler, and her father, the light of whose eyes she was, ordered her off to an untenanted house in the country owned by him, where, he hoped, distance and solitude would settle her aims and restore the bloom lost in the formidable task of determining her vocation.

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"It's curious," thought Molly, as she shook out and hung up her pretty dimities and muslins an hour after her arrival, "how one can miss a person before there's really a chance to miss him, just through knowing you can't see him! I would be very glad if poor old abused Tommy could drop in to-night—if only he wouldn't insist on nonsense!"

"Poor, old abused Tommy," feeling reasonably cheerful, was at that moment smoking a post-prandial cigar with Molly's father in the library, which seemed somber from the consciousness that the house lacked its "Sunshine," as Molly's mother called her, but which Tom was far from regarding as the tomb of his hopes. Instead, he was unfolding to Molly's father his latest inspiration as to besieging methods, and that gentleman was enjoying the joke as much as the young fellow himself.

"Splendid, Tom!" he cried appreciatively. "But don't try it this week; wait a week or ten days until Molly has had time to get good and lonely."

Accordingly it was nine days after her departure from town that Molly opened her window one morning to see something black on the step be-

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low, which, on further examination, proved to be a man's knee, and, on still further—when one leaned out well over the window ledge—developed into Tom's knee, leading up to Tom's entire figure seated calmly on the steps, apparently contemplating the sunrise.

"My gracious!" ejaculated Molly, in a whirl of surprise mingled with distinct pleasure.

Tom looked very big and wholesome with the sunshine lighting up the decided tendency to reddishness lurking in his abundant hair. Tom looked up on her exclamation, and smiled as if it were the most natural thing in the world for him to be discovered on that particular step at that unlikely hour, in a spot far removed from the nearest neighbor, and a hundred miles removed from his supposed whereabouts.

"Hello, Molly!" he remarked. "No flies on that view out there, are there?"

"Where did you come from? When did you get here?" gasped Molly.

"New York. On that train that crawls into that station of yours at half-past three a. m. Leaves New York at eleven, carries milk, or else snails, and is afraid of shocking them by its speed. Say, Molly, why don't you go talk to the president

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of this road and get a decent train put on at night? If you wanted to come up here after we are married I'd hate awfully to know I couldn't come to you if you were sick except on such a ramshackle train as that one!" And Tom turned around to bring his whole face to bear on the window above him, looking at Molly with an earnestness that seemed to hold no other thought except the matter of railroad improvement.

Molly retreated, drawing back from the window ledge, and stood erect.

"After we are married?" she said with great scorn in her voice.

"Yes. Of course, you are right, though! Before, too, because I'd come if you were sick even while we are engaged, but it would be worse when we are married. Then you would be more dependent on me." Tom looked as if he were pitying Molly in advance.

"Tom, I don't know what I am to do with you! I haven't made up my mind—"

"We'll be married first, and you can make up your mind afterward," said Tom, kindly. "I've been thinking what a brute I was to let you have such a hard time. All girls, nice ones, seem to make a fuss about being married; but of course

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there's nothing else to be done when they're so fond of a fellow as you are of me. We'll stop fussing, Molly, and be married soon, and then you'll make up your mind fast enough that it was the only road for you to travel."

"Tom, I can't tell you anything definite, not even yet," said Molly, in her troubled voice, glancing around to make sure no one was overhearing this unexpected conversation. "I'm sorry—"

"Never mind, Molly darling," interrupted Tom. "But I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to sit right here, on this step, until you come out and tell me you're ready to join your half of the engagement on to my half, which hasn't been broken. I shall sit right here till you say yes —but I don't want you to hurry on my account."

"Tom!" cried Molly, laughing in spite of herself. "Do get up this minute, and go around to the other door. I can't open that one, it sticks— but I'll let you in at the back."

"No, my Molly, not unless you let me in much further than into the house," said Tom. "You are to let me into your life, my dear, or here I sit."

"Tom, you aren't in earnest? You can't possibly mean such a thing! Are you mad?" cried Molly.

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"Mean it? 'Up spake the brave Horatius, by the nine gods he swore.' Of course I mean it, my Molly. I shall be right here until you confess you are indeed *my* Molly. Through sun and shower, heat and cold, here I sit. As to being mad, you must judge of that, but haven't I had enough trials to drive a man mad? And I've had no breakfast, and a hasty and light dinner." Tom's voice took on a note of pathos.

"Tom, it's ridiculous!" Molly's voice shook with laughter, near to tears.

"Certainly it's ridiculous," assented Tom promptly. "Perfectly ridiculous. But girls are more to be pitied than blamed. I don't blame you, little Molly."

"Blame me! For trying to be sure I am acting justly to you and to myself!" cried Molly.

"Scruples, my dear, are the bane of a woman's mind—a good woman's. Either they are, as a sex, entirely unscrupulous, or else they are morbidly conscientious, and are pestered with scruples. You will grow wiser as you grow older, my child. How you will laugh at yourself when this is settled—after you open the door, and I'm in. I hope you observe that my position is a symbolic one. It's like 'Bon Jour, Suzanne':

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'Je passe devant ta maison:
Ouvre ta porte!'

Only I don't pass; I sit here and wait. That's a pretty song, Molly. I wish I had a guitar! If you should be cruel enough not to open before to-morrow morning I should like to serenade you all night—of course, I couldn't sleep sitting on these steps!"

"Tom! Tom! Here comes Mrs. Brockett, the woman who brings us eggs and milk. If you sit there nobody knows what she will say, or what gossip will fly over the village. Tom, for pity's sake act like a reasonable being and come around and into the house!" cried Molly, growing desperate as her neighbor hove in sight, and feeling unequal to grappling with Tom's elusive lightness, combined with determination. For she knew him to be quite capable of carrying out his absurd threat.

"Come down and be engaged, then," insisted Tom.

Molly looked down at him; he smiled alluringly up at her. There was laughter in his brown eyes, but there were love and manly tenderness there, too. Underneath his nonsense Tom was not a trifler. Something warmer than the July sun-

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shine was in his handsome face. Molly had been lonely, and her heart leaped to it. Mrs. Brockett turned in at the gate.

"Tom, you dear, foolish, ridiculous Tom, I'll come down," Molly said.

"And let me in?" insisted Tom.

"And let you in," assented Molly.

"On my own terms? 'Way into your heart?" asked Tom.

"On your own terms, forever," said Molly.

And Tom arose as he heard her light feet flying over the stairs.

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A MATTER OF CONSCIENCE.

BY GEORGE BARTON.

A DRIZZLING rain from a leaden sky is frequently symbolic of the heavy-hearted feelings of a disappointed person. John Hanson thought so as he gazed out of the window of his law office into great banks of black clouds, seemingly endless and impenetrable. He felt terribly out of sorts on this particular morning.

He had worked, but clients were few and far between and the outlook was far from promising. He had education and natural talents and felt that the only thing needful was an opportunity to display the knowledge and power he possessed. For a long while he had nursed the ambition of representing his district in Congress. Once there he felt that his future would be assured. Time after time he had made advances in this direction, only to be repulsed because of youth and inexperience.

While he sat musing he was roused by a knock, followed by the entrance of a heavily-built man with a black mustache. Hanson recognized the

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newcomer at a glance. It was "Dave Hendricks, the political leader of the district. Hendricks, nodding coolly to Hanson, seated himself in a comfortable chair. The young man felt called upon to begin the conversation.

"What can I do for you, Mr. Hendricks?"

"Nothing," was the prompt reply, "you can do nothing for me."

There were several moments of silence, and then Hendricks resumed: "But I can do a great deal for *you*."

"I know it," replied Hanson, who realized the enormous power wielded by his visitor.

There was another significant silence, and then Hendricks, ceasing to puff his cigar, gazed steadily at the young man. Finally he spoke:

"You look like an ambitious young man."

Hanson smiled.

"Did you come here this morning for the purpose of flattering me?"

"No," was the reply; "I came to ask you a question."

"What is it?"

"Would you like to go to Congress?"

Hanson gripped the arms of his chair to conceal the agitation he felt. Could it be possible

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that the long-coveted opportunity was at hand? It seemed too good to be true. Nevertheless he answered as calmly as possible.

"Yes, I confess that I would."

"All right; your opportunity is at hand."

"Are you serious?" asked Hanson.

"Never more so in my life."

"But how about Congressman Sandall—has he decided to retire?"

"No," with a laugh; "but we have decided to retire him."

"Do you think," asked Hanson anxiously, "I can win against a man like Samuel Sandall? He has represented this district in Congress for a generation. If he wants to he can surely control a majority of the delegates to the Congressional convention."

"That's where the joke comes in," cried Hendricks, laughing uproariously. "We don't intend to let the old man know a thing about it. He thinks everything is all right and has planned to go out of the city on the day of the nominations. If he was there he could control the convention; but our game is to see that he is not there."

"Our game?" echoed Hanson.

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"Yes, our game," pursued the other, ignoring the danger signals before him; "you see the old man is getting too independent and we want to punish him. He refused to vote for two important bills that we were interested in at the last session. We don't propose to run that risk again. We want our own man there. We want *you* there."

It was Hanson's turn to stare at his visitor. In that stare all of his hopes for preferment were dashed to the ground. He spoke slowly, choosing his words carefully.

"The conditions of my nomination are that I shall deceive Congressman Sandall first, and after that pledge myself to vote as you wish without regard to the merits of legislation?"

"Ah, now, Hanson," remonstrated the other, "you needn't put it in that fashion. We are going to attend to Sandall; all you have to do is to keep quiet, and go along."

"Well, then, Mr. Hendricks," said Hanson, rising from his chair and shaking with suppressed excitement, "all that I have to say is that I decline to go along in any such despicable game."

"What!" almost shrieked Hendricks, "do you mean to say that you are going to refuse this nomi-

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nation? Why, man alive, it's a chance in ten thousand. And it don't cost you anything."

"It would cost me my most valuable asset," said Hanson calmly; "it would cost me my self-respect. I decline to part with that."

Hendricks did not say another word, but his face indicated extreme disgust and incredulity. As he made his way down the staircase he could be heard muttering to himself, "Well, of all the blithering fools I ever met, this one is the worst."

That night as he sat talking to the dearest girl on earth Hanson could not rid himself of the recollection of the day's events. Julia Joyce was thoughtful and sympathetic, and she noticed his preoccupation.

"John," she said gently, "you do not seem yourself to-night. You are pale and troubled. Share your difficulties with me—I am sure you would do so with your joys."

John tried to evade the question, but she was persistent in her own tender way. Being a woman, she carried her point. Manlike, John blurted out the thing that filled his mind most.

"I am troubled," he said; "I have made a brave attempt to be somebody on your account, but it seems futile. My prospects were never so dis-

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couraging as they are now, and for that reason there are times when I think it would be wrong to ask you to share your lot with me."

"What nonsense, John," she cried, with a hearty outburst of indignation. "Don't talk to me as if I were a doll or a fashion plate. If you win me it is because we have faith in each other."

Her honesty seemed to clear the cobwebs out of his head.

"I think you are right," he said; "forgive me for talking in such a despondent strain."

"You are forgiven," she said smilingly, "but now tell me really what you have on your mind."

He started at this and stammered a bit.

"Why, I've—I've—just been telling you."

"No, you haven't; you've been indulging in glittering generalities. Now tell me what has happened to-day to upset you so much."

Retreat was impossible now, so he told the whole story as gracefully as possible, omitting only the names. At its conclusion she said:

"Do you regret your decision?"

"Not in the least," was the answer.

"Then why are you troubled?"

"It's simply a matter of conscience. I think sometimes that it is my duty to go and warn the

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Congressman of the conspiracy that has been organized to accomplish his defeat, and then again I feel that I received the information to a certain extent under the seal of confidence."

"Did you pledge yourself to secrecy?"

"Oh, no."

"Well, this Congressman—what sort is he?"

"I never met him in my life; but from all that I hear about him he must be a very unattractive person. He is hard in his manner and conversation; dislikes young men exceedingly, and was never known to extend a helping hand to a person in distress."

"Not a very pretty picture."

"No; but that is his reputation—he has taken a quarter of a century to earn it."

"Are there no bright sides to the portrait?"

"Only that he is rigidly honest."

"That is a great deal in these days."

"I agree with you."

"By the way," she exclaimed suddenly, "what is the name of this monster?"

"Congressman Samuel Sandall," replied Hanson, without pausing to consider.

She gave a scream and almost jumped from the chair.

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"What is the matter?" he asked anxiously. "Are you ill?"

"Oh, no; only a sudden pain. Still you had better leave me now."

This was rattled off so quickly, so feverishly, and so unnaturally, that Hanson was dazed. He walked to the door, saying stiffly:

"I'll bid you good evening."

"Oh!" she cried, "don't be cross."

He melted like snow in the noonday sun.

"Promise me," she said, laying her hands on his shoulders, "promise me you will not mention this thing to another living soul, and come here again to-morrow night."

He promised, and going home wondered what in the world had come over the gentle girl who had never before, in all of their acquaintance, shown such excitement. He remained at his office all of the next day, and as he was about leaving for home, received this telegram:

"JOHN HANSON, City:

"You have been unanimously nominated for Congress. Congratulations.

"JULIA JOYCE."

His head was in a whirl. What did it mean? How did it happen? Had he not been remiss in

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not notifying Sandall of the conspiracy? What should he do now? How did Julia learn of this? What did her telegram mean? While he was revolving all of these thoughts in his mind a delegation called to officially apprise him of his nomination. "Dave" Hendricks was the chairman. Hanson, in responding, said the news was a complete surprise and he would have to take the matter under consideration.

That night, when he started to keep his appointment with Julia, Hanson wondered what he should do or say to explain himself. The room was darkened, but Julia came out of the gloom leading a gentleman by the hand.

"John," she said softly, "I want you to meet this gentleman."

Hanson looked at the old man with wrinkled face and gray hair who stood before him, and bowed respectfully.

"John," resumed Julia, "this is Congressman Samuel Sandall."

"Sandall!" shouted John, unable to control his excitement. "Why—"

"Mr. Sandall," she interrupted, with a quiet wave of the little hand, "is my uncle and my guardian."

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"Why, I didn't know—"

"Certainly not," she said, cutting him short again, "how could you? We have only known each other for a few months, and I didn't have time to tell of all my family connections. Besides uncle has been in Washington all of the time."

"But this nomination," protested John, "he should know my position."

"I knew it last night," said the Congressman kindly. "Julia told me everything. I have been thinking of retiring for years, and when I heard of this I determined to turn the tables on those fellows. I remained in town, and, controlling the convention, named you. You earned it by the way you preserved your self-respect."

"And you will accept, John, won't you?" asked Julia, nestling up to him.

"Yes," he said heartily, "I will accept."

He turned a look of tenderness on her. She recognized its meaning and blushed furiously.

"And you?" said John.

"I," she said faintly, "I will accept too, John."

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ERMINIE'S TRIAL.

BY E. MCAULIFFE.

In a lovely green valley among the Dolomite Alps is the home of Erminie. Her father is an Alpine peasant, her brothers are herdsmen and hunters; brave youths, like all the peasants of this region, filled with the spirit of pure patriotism, devoted to the reigning family, the motto of each may be read in the last words of Hofer: "My Kaiser and Tyrol!"

Erminie and her sisters assisted their parents, not only in the domestic but the field work. Among the Tyrolese idleness is an unknown vice, the women and girls work as hard as the men; while the men are away with their cattle, or acting as guides to mountain climbers, the sowing and planting and reaping is left to their women folk. It is no uncommon sight in Tyrol to see a young girl harnessed to a cart loaded with hay and drawing it alone!

During the short summer season, when the hotels are overflowing with guests, the peasants open their cottages to receive late comers. Every

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cottage has a few rooms fitted up with great neatness for such occasions, and they are adorned with quantities of beautiful lace, which the girls make in the long winter season.

We happened to be lodged in such a house, and enjoyed it immensely. Hotels are the same everywhere; you meet the same kind of fashionable tourists, whose principal topic is invariably the amount of money they are spending and such inanities. It is decidedly more of a novelty when traveling in foreign countries to mix among the people, and see their inner life. There were five daughters in the family with which we stayed. Anna, the eldest, was blind; all day long she used to sit on a stone bench at the door knitting marvelous productions in lace curtains, bedspreads, etc., for which she found a ready market among the foreign visitors.

The second daughter, Ida, waited on us. She was a tall, handsome girl, whose native costume became her well, notwithstanding a rather discontented expression of countenance. We soon found out that it was the dream of her life to be hired by some of the many visitors and taken away from the horrors of the Alpine winter. Fully sympathizing with her, we spoke to some

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English ladies at the hotel where we went for meals, and one of them said she would be delighted to have a Tyrolese girl for a nursemaid, they were so faithful and reliable. Next day the lady called and made arrangements with Ida to go with her to England. Toward evening I heard great excitement in the house; many voices, and one ever higher than the others, whose words were mingled with sobs and screams. I went out on the landing to ask what had happened. The poor mother was in violent hysterics at the thought of her child being taken so far away, and refused to be comforted. The only thing to be done was to tell the English lady the condition of affairs, and she very properly declined taking the girl at the risk of breaking the mother's heart. Some young girls had gone away to service and never returned to the green hills of Tyrol, so that mothers there were chary of losing their daughters.

Erminie was the youngest of the sisters, just eighteen, and the beauty of the village. Never have I seen so modest, so unconscious a beauty. Her face was absolutely perfect in contour and feature; her soft, dark eyes, shaded by long lashes, her hair abundant, and a pervading sweetness in

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her expression that filled one with a sensation of pleasure, like the odor of a flower or a strain of exquisite music.

She was betrothed to a young Alpine hunter, tall and handsome. Many an evening when the young people were assembled around the porch have we listened with delight to his rich, manly voice singing Italian* love songs to the accompaniment of the mandolin. "*E prezioso d'amore ogni istante!*" Precious indeed to young hearts are those hours of first and early love.

When the full moon lit up all the ways with radiance the song was abandoned for the dance, and joyous was the ringing laughter as the light feet kept time to the music of some rustic instrument. Then, in the contagious merriment, even Anna, the blind sister, forgot her infirmity. They were like the lily maidens of the Black Forest, all day long only water lilies, floating drowsily on the Mummel Zee:

"But when the dreamful noon of night
Rains down on earth its yellow light,
Up spring they, full of lightness,
In woman's form and brightness.

* * * *

And hand-with-hand, linked wreathwise round,
The virgins dance in order."

*Being a frontier village, the peasants speak both Italian and German.

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Swiftly in the gay circle sped the twinkling feet, the parents looking on, happy in the happiness of their children. These peasants are not versed in science, but the highest morality prevails among them. Pure and innocent as children, and happy as children, the presence of the elders is no restraint, for no restraint is needed.

But a dark cloud is slowly moving upon the horizon, and about to burst with terrific force over the gentle Erminie. For some time past her Anton has been complaining of his eyes; a medical examination was followed by the dreadful sentence of—incurable blindness. Alas for the youth! In the strength and vigor of early manhood, with all its budding ambitions and plans for the future! And alas for the betrothed bride! who felt all his pain and her own loss; for her father, a plain-spoken man, told her that to think of Anton for a husband was useless; she must give him up and choose another from among the young men of the village. Erminie replied meekly, but firmly:

"I will choose no husband but Anton. I will wait and pray; maybe the good God will cure him, and if not, then I am strong enough to work for him."

The blind lover continued to come to the house,

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but the joyful sounds of song and dance were heard no more. A deadly gloom overhung the household; father and mother disapproved of him, and poor Erminie lost the roses from her cheeks in this time of bitter trial. Thus the summer came to an end—outside, the gloom of approaching winter; inside, the gloom of sorrow and darkness.

The following winter we spent in Vienna at the house of an American friend. Many a time we spoke of the sad story of the young lovers, whose constancy was being so sorely tried. At my friend's house I met many distinguished people, among others an eminent oculist. One day I took an opportunity of speaking to him on the subject of the blindness so common in Alpine districts, its cause and the possibility of cure. To my great joy he said that in many cases he had known it to yield to treatment.

I then told him the story of Anton, and he became deeply interested. He had lately joined the Alpine Club, and the members were to have a meeting in the summer in Erminie's village. He would look up the case, he said, or, better still, have Anton brought to Vienna and put under treatment at once.

The cost of travel for a peasant in a country

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where there is a fourth class car on the railway is a mere trifle; so we wrote Anton and told him that there was some hope of cure, but that he must not be too much elated, as it was by no means certain. We would do all that could be done and leave the result to a higher power.

At first the doctor was a little discouraged; he found it a very bad case, and foreboded long months of weary waiting and hope deferred. But scientific skill, aided by youth and a splendid, unbroken constitution, triumphed. When summer came again Anton could see!

It is needless to describe how Erminie day by day watched the passengers alighting from the *diligenza,* until her patience was rewarded one bright evening by finding him whom she sought—her Anton, with his blue eyes full of light and love. And how the lovers embraced, heedless of the bystanders! Joy was restored once more; again the sound of song and music closed the evening hours. An early day was set for the wedding, and Ida, partaking of the general jubilation, consented to marry the faithful youth who had waited long for her, and to give up all her desires for travel. So there was a double wedding—Erminie's trial was over.

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"Oh golden time of Love's devotion,
When tenderest hopes and thrills have birth;
When hearts are filled with blest emotion,
And heaven itself shines out on earth!"

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THE WEDDING RING.

BY MAURICE FRANCIS EGAN.

JARDOYNE had been very much in love with Alice Jordan when he made the usual promises; he had done it in a half-amused way. Alice, he knew, adored him, and he was sure that he adored Alice. A submission of this sort was little enough to pay for such beautiful worship as she gave him. His mother did not like it at all. She had no fancy that her grandchildren should be brought up Catholics.

"It's a mere transient idea!" he said. "Alice will soon get over these romantic medieval fads when she has been in society awhile."

Old Mrs. Jardoyne smoothed the fine lace at her throat, frowned, and chose the finest Dresden teacup for her son. He was her only son.

"If I had known this I don't believe that I would have given her my diamond for the engagement ring," Mrs. Jardoyne said, as she delicately poured the tea. "It was a splendid diamond—

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and yet it would be hard to find a sweeter, more gentle, better bred girl. Perhaps this fanaticism will pass. It's bad enough to be married by a priest, but this business of the promises is almost too much. Still, there was Caroline Keating, she soon dropped her little bigotries after she had been with your set for a while; so let it pass."

"It will pass, mother," said Jardoyne, good-humoredly. "In college Professor Collier always began his philosophical lectures with the formula, 'There's no religion now—only a philosophy.' And in the atmosphere of our home, Alice, who has known nobody all her life but Roman Catholics, will soon drop her belief in the magic of angels and evil spirits. She really believes in them."

And he laughed.

Horace Jardoyne was, in his own opinion, extremely modern. He had inherited a comfortable income, every reasonable wish had all his life been gratified; he was intellectual looking, even distinguished, and he had come to be regarded at twenty-eight as the leading mind in a small Massachusetts town in which he practised law in gentlemanly leisure. Alice Jordan had lately visited an aunt in this town. She was pretty, graceful, well-educated, and with an air and style not usu-

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ally found in small New England towns. Horace had proposed and been accepted.

The marriage took place shortly after Jardoyne's talk with his mother over the teacups. And when Alice left Mrs. Jardoyne's house for the wedding-trip, she wore not only the diamond engagement ring, but the beautifully arabesqued wedding-ring on which the artistic Jardoyne had spared no pains, for he was devoted to all the fine arts. He reflected with satisfaction that Alice was poor; he could not have endured a wife who would be independent of him in anything.

As to Alice herself, she was like a flower, and, as he looked at her, Heine's "Du bist wie eine blume" came into his mind. His heart rejoiced in her, he would make her happy in his own way. As to this phantom of religion which stood between them, it would pass, of course. Alice followed all his movements with her blue eyes. She certainly loved him with all her heart. "A time will come," she said to herself, "when he will know the truth; I must do my best."

"You value that ring?" he asked.

She kissed the engraved band of gold. "More than my life!" she said.

He was content. "She loves me too much,"

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he said, "to let a fantasy separate us even in thought."

After a short trip in England, France, and Holland, the Jardoynes settled in the pleasant old house in Matherville. Society welcomed young Mrs. Horace Jardoyne with cheerfulness. There was no Catholic Church in Matherville, but old Madame de Torence, widow of a French diplomatist (she had been a Miss Brassington), had a private chapel in her house, a mile from Matherville. To this chapel the Jardoyne servants and young Mrs. Jardoyne repaired on Sundays and holy days.

"Couldn't we have a chapel in our own house?" old Mrs. Jardoyne asked. "I shouldn't in the least mind it. I have come rather to like Alice's steadfastness. Carlyle said that 'the Mass is the only real thing in Europe!'"

"My dear mother," Jardoyne answered lightly, "Alice's fancy will pass. She loves me too much not to come over to my view."

Old Mrs. Jardoyne shook her head. "There's something *awfully* steadfast about these Catholics. I've studied Alice."

When young Horace was born his father kept his promise reluctantly.

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"It's awful," he said to his mother; "we've been Episcopalians for hundreds of years—"

"Since Henry VIII.," said his mother, drily, "and Unitarians for twenty-five."

"It's awful, anyhow," he said. "But she loves me, and I have promised."

"You'll do nothing with Horace until he sees that you're really in earnest," old Mrs. Jardoyne said to Alice on the day before she died. "Don't be afraid of him when it comes to religion. He thinks that he is a *god* to you. Now, dear, say a prayer for me. I asked him yesterday to give you enough money to make a chapel of the west library —you promised to do it if the little Horace should be born safe and sound, didn't you?"

Alice blushed. "Horace is rich enough—but he will not do it. When I told him that I had promised this to the guardian angels he laughed."

"He has a good heart, but I've made him full of conceit. Keep your promise, dear; the little Horace in this world needs your guardian angels. And remember that the diamond on your finger is yours; I gave it to you through Horace. Oh, I see he has it set in your wedding-ring now. Well, a woman ought to have something of her own. During Horace's father's life I had nothing.

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After the death of old Mrs. Jardoyne, little Horace was taken with diphtheria. He was near death. Alice stormed Heaven with her prayers, and Father Craigis, her old confessor, came down from Boston. Jardoyne was mild and subdued. He was frightened beyond words by the child's danger. Again Alice renewed her promise. When the child recovered Horace was easy and jubilant again.

"There's no need of a chapel. If you want a lot of Paris gowns say so, but I don't care for that sort of thing in my house."

He said good-by and started for a six weeks' trip in the Adirondacks. In the mean time, little Horace waxed stout and strong—and still Alice, in the midst of luxury, had not kept her promise. Horace laughed to himself.

"She'll be past this folly for the Mass before little Horace is old enough to learn what it means."

It was on Sunday, on the Feast of the Holy Angels, that he returned, brown and hale, from his trip. He was in the best of spirits. He raved ecstatically over little Horace, and when Father Craigis appeared at breakfast he shook hands with him cordially.

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"It's a pity that you didn't come earlier," said the old priest pleasantly. "Mass is just over. And the little room is beautiful; it makes a jewel of a chapel. It's a great thing to be so rich and so generous."

Jardoyne proved his good breeding; he never asked questions. He looked at Alice. Her eyes were on the sugar bowl, she had the silver tongs in her hand, the left hand, strange to say. His ring was not there.

"Alice!" he began, feeling as if evil was in the air, "You have lost—"

"No, my dear," she said, sweetly. Then she glided over to his place, and whispered:

"I pawned it in Boston. The man lent me eight hundred on the diamond. But the chapel is perfect. After all, a woman is poor indeed if she can't call her wedding-ring her own."

He gasped; his face turned white.

"Does the priest know?" he whispered.

"No."

"Alice," he said aloud, "if you've done this thing, your God must be very real to you—you've put Him before *me*."

"He is before you," she said. "He is more than life!"

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Father Craigis had occupied himself with the little Horace.

"You had such good fortune in securing that exquisite chalice after Cellini," the priest said to Jardoyne.

"It was my wife's taste," Horace said; but he began to brighten. The chapel *must* be worth seeing. "By the way, Father, I'd like to see some books of a religious nature. The Catholic Church seems to be a real thing—an awfully real thing," he added, noticing Alice's ringless left hand. "If it's real enough to make Alice do that, I'd better find out more about it," he thought.

His self-love had received a blow. Alice was superhumanly in earnest. On the Feast of the Holy Angels, a year from that day, the Bishop received him into the Church in the chapel of the pawned wedding ring—the ring that sparkled again on Alice's finger.

"These Catholics are capable of *anything*," he said, "for God!"

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THE LOVE STORY OF SISTER CLAIRE.

BY JEROME HARTE.

THE daughter of John Murray hesitated at the edge of the curb, and looked with quite girlish fear and wonder to left and right of the hurrying Babylonian street.

"*Voilà!*" cried a strong young voice just behind her. She half turned, startled, and, after a second's pause, the voice floated in her face and its owner, a debonair youngster, with a long pipe in his mouth, said, a suggestion of awe in his laughing voice, "*Mon Dieu,* Fritz! *Voilà!*"

The daughter of John Murray beheld two students of the Quarter looking down at her, the one boldly, the other questioningly and admiringly. They were good to look at, and they were smiling at her in a friendly way; but she was alone in a strange street in a strange city and innate timidity had taught her mistrust. Tears started to her big, frightened eyes, and her lips

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quivered as she began, with an attractive little show of reserve and dignity: "Pardonnez-moi, messieurs—"

The debonair youngster sent up a shout of laughter and clapped his companion on the back. "*Pardonnez!*" he mimicked with a grimace. "Great Scott! the little Madonna is Anglaise, Fritz, and she thinks she must try to talk French to us—to *us*, Fritz!" He went off into another shout of laughter. "Say, why don't you laugh, Fritz?" he cried.

He who was called Fritz smiled slowly, a smile that was pleasant to see. He stood staring at the fresh, fair young face before him, his hat in his hands, a friendly questioning in his clear, kind eyes. The daughter of John Murray brightened suddenly. They were English, perhaps *Americans!* Surely she was safe to tell them of her plight!

"Oh, messieurs, I'm lost," she cried, "and I speak such very bad French!"

"So do we!" said Fritz, promptly, and they laughed.

"My father will be done painting at sundown, and when I am not there he will be mad with fright! He does not know Paris even as well as

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I, and he speaks French not at all! You will take me home, messieurs?" she said.

"Certainly," said Fritz. "Where do you live?"

"You see my father is an artist, too," ran on the girl, "and we live in the Latin Quarter, just around the corner from Monsieur Loder's salon. You know Monsieur Loder has a tiny garden at the back, and in it is a drinking fountain with seven cupids around the center. The children of the Quarter go in and drink and play there, and Monsieur Loder paints them as little cupids and cherubs. Surely you know Monsieur? All Paris knows Monsieur, I warrant! We moved yesterday, and I have forgotten the street and number. But Monsieur Loder—of course, you—"

The men looked at each other slowly, and Fritz bit his lips. "You see," he said, "we do not know Paris very well; we have been here such a short time."

"But Monsieur Loder—" repeated the girl, with tearful eyes.

"Monsieur Loder is undoubtedly known to half of Paris, but we, now, being recent arrivals and American at that, have never heard of him," Fritz said. "But bless you! we'll find some one who has. My friend here, Monsieur Parker—

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allow me to introduce Monsieur Parker, Miss—" The big fellow paused expectantly.

"Oh! my name's Melise Murray!" cried the girl.

"Mademoiselle Murray, allow me to introduce Monsieur Parker," finished Fritz, solemnly.

Parker bowed elaborately, with a sweep of his picturesque hat. "I am overjoyed!" he cried. "I said *voilà* when I first saw you to-day, Miss Murray. Allow me to explain. You are the most beautiful—"

Fritz kicked him slyly. "Mademoiselle wants to get home to her father," he said shortly. "We must find Monsieur Loder's salon."

"Then you won't let me tell her first that she's the model Madonna we have been searching for?" said Parker, laughing.

Melise clapped her petite hands. "Oh, messieurs!" she cried, "I was praying to the Madonna when you came! You know at home, before we came, I always prayed to her and somehow she never failed me! Messieurs are true Catholics?" asked Melise. Her little feet were touching safe ground.

"Not I," laughed Parker; but Fritz said, "I am, thank God!"

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"He was!" said Parker, and laughed again, his noisy, careless laugh.

"I am," repeated Fritz with a grave face. He looked at Melise. "We must go now, Parker and I, to find Monsieur Loder," he said.

"And Mademoiselle will stand here and wait for us, I suppose?" laughed Parker.

Fritz frowned and kicked at the curb. "Of course not!" he said, a little savagely. "We have a landlady—she is not very young—nor very lovely. She is old and not pleasant, and dirty, and she swears a great deal. But to be sure, that is in French and you would not understand her!" He stared at Melise, meditatively. "We will take you there, and then, when we have found the whereabouts of Monsieur Loder's salon, we will come back and take you home."

Melise Murray went with them at once, the tears dried upon her trusting face. She seemed very small and childish as she tripped along between the two tall and broad-shouldered youths.

"Oh!" she cried, "you'll never know how glad I was when I found that you were Americans! I'm so tired of speaking *la langue française!* And I speak it so badly! Everybody laughs! And when I heard you were a Catholic," she

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cried, turning to Fritz, "I knew that I was quite safe! Isn't it funny? I knew that the dear Madonna had sent you in answer to my prayers, and that I should get home before the dusk fell!"

At the door of their quaint, dingy lodging-house she clapped her restless little hands. "Oh, it's pretty!" she cried. "I won't be frightened a bit. You'll be back soon?" she asked, wistfully.

"Right soon," declared Fritz. He put her into the care of their questioning-eyed, untidy landlady, and bade that worthy get her a cup of tea. "Mademoiselle is completely fatigued," he said; and Parker and he waved their hats in adieu.

Parker whistled when the door had closed. "You have heard the story of the needle and the haystack, *n'est-ce pas?*" he remarked.

Fritz pulled his hat down over his eyes. "I had a sister once," he said, with seeming irrelevance. "She was little, and fair, and big-eyed, and quite pure. She wore her golden hair parted and waved—just so, like Melise Murray's—and *la Madone chère* that you and I would paint. She died when she was small—like Melise Murray. She believed I could do almost anything, and I never failed her. I think we would better go now direct to the Latin Quarter. You shall hunt for

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old Spalder, who knows so many people, and I—I will go from corner to corner looking for a possible back yard with a fountain and seven cupids—and Monsieur Loder, *le merveilleux,* painting beside it! We will meet at Spalder's in just an hour—*n'est-ce pas?* It is getting late, and monsieur le père must have his daughter before the light grows too dim to paint longer. You understand?"

Parker understood. Few men misunderstood Fritz Burns when he talked.

Ah, well, they found Monsieur Loder of drinking-fountain-and-seven-cupids fame, and just around the corner, under the roof, the American artist, who had just moved in and was busy at his canvas amid his few unsettled belongings. John Murray had not yet missed his daughter, and Fritz brought her home before the dusk had fallen.

"You must never again go so far alone!" he said, sharply. "Paris is not a—good city!"

Melise laughed. "Monsieur Burns," she cried, "to-morrow I will burn three candles to the dear Madonna for your soul!" And she left him, still laughing. Nature had made Melise Murray of the stuff that all unknowing breaks men's hearts, and Fritz Burns dreamed of her that night.

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He did not tell Parker that he was going to paint Melise Murray. Their partnership search after a face beautiful enough for a picture of *la Madone chère* had suddenly lost interest for him, and he was irritable when Parker spoke of it.

"Just get a model yourself," he growled, unexpectedly. "I—I won't paint the picture with you!"

Parker whistled and struck the truth at once in his airy, flaunting fashion. "Aha! old fellow!" cried he, "you've found the model to your *own* satisfaction—that is it? Ye gods! that *I* likewise did not win the good graces of monsieur le père!"

Fritz glared at him and went out, slamming the door. Along the hall he could hear Parker laughing noisily, but good-naturedly. Parker did not really care. Eh bien! he would find another beautiful Madonna-like face whose owner might be induced to pose for him! It was a pleasant hunt!

But Fritz did not tell Parker that he was painting a likeness of Melise Murray. Parker never knew. Few men who knew Fritz Burns ever saw that picture. And yet it was a masterpiece, the one good thing that young Burns ever did. It brought him neither fame nor fortune, for he would not hang it where men could gaze upon

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it and he would not sell it. He never sold it; and its hanging later where men could gaze upon it was not of Fritz's doing. Yet it made my story possible.

John Murray had been a well-to-do artisan in a remote American village, but he had been an artisan with dreams. While he painted barns and houses and signs for the corner store, he built castles in the air, and those castles were builded in another kind of a world, a beautiful world of color and form, wherein he wielded not the brush of a house painter and a whitewasher, but the brush of an *artist.* He was industrious and frugal and so was his wife, and the two put away money. They owned a home, well furnished, and they had a snug little bank account. John Murray had his dreams, but he had also his wife, and he lived as faithfully as he dreamed. Melise at fifteen was the only child of parents who were almost wealthy in the simple existence of the village.

And then her mother died. John Murray felt that now he dared realize his dreams, for Melise had long been teasing to see a bit of the world, and he himself had been dreaming long. In less than a year he had sold his small property

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and all pertaining thereto, and had taken his daughter to Paris, the Mecca of his dreams. He and Melise were like two children, for they both believed sincerely in John Murray's talent.

But John Murray had no talent, save to paint barns and houses, and he reaped to the full the harvest of his madness in thinking that he had other talent than that. His little wealth went like snow before the sun, and in a year in Paris they were almost hungry in their wee lodging-home. That had come to be a real garret, up under the eaves. Melise kept it clean and sweet-smelling, and John Murray kept it full of canvases that never, never sold. It was quite pitiful.

Into their lives Fritz Burns came, and came in the very nick of time. He was not rich, but he was not starving, and he could pay Melise Murray to pose for him. And he paid her liberally. He painted his one picture of her in her father's studio, and left it there after each sitting. He painted slowly and with all his soul, for two reasons—he loved that which he was painting, and he wished very much to help without being suspected of it by John Murray and his daughter.

Melise was a slender, petite girl, with a faintly-tinted oval face and great blue eyes, in the depths

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of which were mirrored the absolute innocence and purity of her child's soul. Her pale golden hair she parted simply, and it waved in a halo about her small, well-shaped head. To paint her as *la Madone chère* needed but little change from her every-day appearance, for she was the true Madonna type. The picture had been pronounced finished but two days when John Murray died.

His death was not expected. It was the return of some old heart trouble, and only John Murray himself seemed disposed to understand.

"I failed," he said, grimly, to Melise and Fritz and the shadows. He had failed utterly in his life's dearest desire, and he had dragged his daughter to financial ruin by his fool's dreaming. He could not but die regretfully. And yet, in his death hour his religion had brought him comfort, and he was dying with the peace of God upon his soul.

Of course, Fritz begged in his frank, earnest way to be allowed to marry Melise. It had been the sweetest wish of his life since he had seen her that day alone upon the bustling Parisian street, and he told her father that. But their answer sank like lead into his heart. Melise had long been pledged to a life of sacrifice and prayer,

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and her father's death would only hasten by a few years her entrance into the convent. In vain Fritz pleaded against the one absorbing wish of Melise Murray's white soul.

"It is all I want, good Fritz," she said, between her tears, "to be with God forever and aye."

And poor Fritz bowed his head in heart-aching assent. Two of the good nuns came in soon with John Murray's father confessor, and they were there when John Murray died.

After the funeral they took Melise to their cloister home, and Fritz Burns settled John Murray's poor little affairs. He wrote to the home friends and paid a bill or two—out of his own pocket. Then Fritz Burns sold his share of the studio with Parker and, with only one treasure, the picture of Melise Murray as *la Madone chère,* quitted Paris.

He brought and gave the painting to his mother in America. She hung it over the bed in her room, because she was a devout woman, and she did not understand the artistic value of her possession. Few people saw the picture, and those who saw it did not understand either. Before she died, her brother, a priest, asked her to give him the picture. She promised. After she had died,

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Fritz was going away on his wanderings again, and time had healed somewhat the love-sorrow of his heart; so he saw that his uncle got *la Madone chère.* When this uncle died, a few years later, he willed the painting to his best friend, a famous doctor-priest in a distant city. The doctor-priest appreciated its artistic value, and he had it hung high at the end of the main entrance of the Sisters' Hospital, where it reigned supreme. The main entrance was well lighted, at the front by its swinging doors and arched glass panes, and by the cathedral windows at the back, above where the picture hung. The doctors and nurses and visitors could not but notice the painting as they passed across the main entrance in going from ward to ward; and there was a cot just inside the door of the accidents' ward off the balcony that lay in a line with the Madonna's head as it hung on the wall in the main entrance. The patient in that cot could not help but see the painting when he looked toward the door. Father Phalen, the famous doctor-priest, always had placed a dying man in that cot. Something in the softly-lighted face of *la Madone chère* brought to the dying man a love and peace and consolation that words can not describe. Father Phalen knew.

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He was an artist and he knew that the pictured face held a power in its beautiful, purely-colored depths.

The French nuns are sometimes famous nurses. Sister Claire came to the hospital with six other nuns straight from France to help in the emergency wards. Chicago was such a strenuous city, and there were so many being injured there! The Sisters' Hospital was busy those hot, hustling days of the Exposition, and their ambulances were in demand. Father Phalen and his colleagues saved many lives, but they could not save them all—that was impossible.

Sister Claire and the man in the death-cot looked through the door together and saw the face of *la Madone chère* gazing compassionately at them across the balcony. Sister Claire had been in the hospital but twenty-four hours and this was almost her first moment of duty; the man had been brought in by the doctors a little while before, and his eyes had only just opened to consciousness. The lower part of his body had been crushed in a street railway collision, and Father Phalen had said that it was only a question of minutes or hours—and a big man's endurance. There was absolutely no help.

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Man and nun gasped together, and Sister Claire gave a little cry that was almost a moan. She rose in her chair, softly, silently, as trained and startled nerves will sometimes let a woman do, and she stared at the painting with clasped hands. Then, she sank slowly to her seat again and turned her eyes upon the dying man. She crushed her hands to her heart and choked down her struggling breath.

The man on the cot strained his eyes toward the painting. The dying sun of day fell through the cathedral windows and lit up the Madonna's face with a thousand faint rainbow glints. His tense hands clasped the white coverlet and his purple lips twitched.

"My God!" he whispered; "my merciful God!"

Sister Claire bent toward him. She put one cool, slim hand upon his burning one. "Monsieur is a true Catholic and would see the priest?" she questioned in her beautiful, low voice.

The man turned his head to the sound and gazed at her wildly. "My God!" he repeated; "my merciful God!"

Sister Claire knew even in that instant as her hand went to the bell and rang for the priest.

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He was near, just outside, waiting for the summons of any dying patient who might chance to be a Catholic. He came in at once and to the cot, and Sister Claire stole out upon the balcony and stood there leaning against the wall, gazing down at the face of *la Madone chère.* She was very white and still. The years had taught her much that she had not understood at seventeen, and she knew that she was looking upon a great painting. But what had time brought to the man whose hand had wrought this work of art? He was dying alone and presumably friendless in the public accident ward of a charity hospital! She remembered that they had said that there was no card about him to tell them who he was. She had prayed for him every day since she was seventeen, and her prayers had brought him—the grace of a death attended by the happiness of peace with his Maker! God knows best!

She went back to Fritz Burns as he lay upon the cot, his face quite blue and still, waiting for death. He was staring out again at *la Madone chère* as it hung within the range of his sight, and lit up with the dying rays of day. He turned his dimming eyes to the nun's face.

"If I could paint you now," he said wistfully,

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"I would paint a Madonna at which the world would gasp."

Sister Claire smoothed his pillow and looked at him, wistfully, too. He was so big and strong to die!

"The priest has told monsieur?" she asked, and he nodded. "It is such a little while, monsieur," she said and caught her breath in a sob. "We will pray, monsieur—yes?"

Fritz Burns smiled a rare, sweet smile. "I have a prayer to tell you, Sister," he said, "and I have just time before I—go." He looked out at *la Madone chère* and then back at the peerless face of Sister Claire. "You see," he began, "I am waiting with perfect content and joy to see my Maker. I have no pain, no regret. Please don't weep, little Sister," he said. "Don't you see it as it should be? I never painted again. *La Madone chère* was the last beautiful thing of my life, and my mother loved it. I came home from Paris a good Catholic, that which I had not been in years, and I stayed to comfort my mother until she died. I wandered away to other climes, then, but I have never wandered away from my Church. I do not know just how that picture got here—but it does not matter now. I am

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neither penniless nor friendless. I've lived my life and lived it as a Christian and a Catholic should, and I am ready, I think, to—die. My friend Parker can be located by sending word to the Art Gallery at the Exposition. He expected me in town to-night, but I came on an earlier train, as God willed it, and so—I am here. My money and any one who will care to know—Parker will take care of that."

He moved his head restlessly and blood gathered upon his lips. Sister Claire wiped it away, and as she bent above him two tears fell upon the dying man's cheeks. He laughed a little.

"You see, Sister," he said, "I am glad to go! I know—you'll pray—for me."

After a moment, he said to her: "And you—your life?"

"It has always been just as I had wished, monsieur," she said simply. "I have lived and loved the life I chose. I know no regret and little sorrow."

"There is another world," said Fritz, dreamily; "who knows? Perhaps, up there—I may paint—"

His words trailed to nothing and he smiled. "*La Madone chère,*" he whispered, and died, an *Ave* on his smiling lips.

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Sister Claire clasped his hands upon his breast, and her tears streamed down and wet the face that was not yet cold. She went out to find Father Phalen, and her petite oval face beneath its great white bonnet was quite childish in its tearful grief.

"I knew him—when I was—almost a child," she said to the doctor-priest. "Very long ago—in my father's studio—he painted me—as *la Madone chère*—" She stopped and kissed her crucifix. "God have mercy," she whispered.

Father Phalen gazed at the slim oval face and the great blue eyes, wonderful in their beauty, beneath the stiff, flaring white cap of the Order. He saw things so quickly, did Father Phalen.

"It is the same," he muttered to himself, "the same!"

Then he touched her arm. "Go to bed, now, and rest until to-morrow," he said gently. "We need you here so much, little Sister."

The nun smiled suddenly through her tears. "I do not need the rest, Father!" she said, simply—and went back to duty in the accident ward.

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"IN TERRA PAX."

BY MAUD REGAN.

THE sweet-faced nurse moving softly through the long white ward, her arms laden with pungently fragrant spruce boughs and dark-leaved glossy holly, sighed a little as she passed old François' bed.

He seemed so isolated from hope or cheer lying there grim and gaunt, his dark eyes gazing somberly beyond her out on a future which held but one hope.

For nearly a year he had lain thus, silent and for the most part uncomplaining, wrapped in a surly reserve which shut him from the friendship of the ward, and discouraged the overtures of those charitable visitors to whom at stated intervals the hospital opened its doors. These learning from a few rebuffs that old François would have none of their gifts, seasoned with the kindly platitudes, so grotesquely inadequate to the tragedy of his lot, passed him with a shrug or a sigh.

Only the old curé persisted, puzzled and dis-

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tressed, seeking always the open sesame to that hot, rebellious heart.

Out in the little French-Canadian parish, whence the curé came to visit him as often as his scant leisure and slender purse permitted the indulgence, François had been a man of standing and repute. A certain careless good nature, a readiness to shoulder burdens other than his own, a rude eloquence of which his political party had often made capital; these things had established his prestige among his fellows. But his pre-eminence in that small primitive world was mainly due to a giant strength, at once the wonder and boast of the parish.

Tall, broad of shoulder, deep of chest, with sparkling eyes and a mane of iron gray hair, tossed back from his weatherbeaten face, he had seemed, ten months before, the very embodiment of splendid, buoyant life.

A sculptor would have exulted in the free play of muscle beneath the smooth, healthy skin, in the strong, rhythmic swing of his arms as his ax descended tirelessly among the crashing pines. The stranger, meeting parish boasts with tales of Cyr or Sandow, was sometimes led to Gérard's smithy, whose interior vaguely suggested an old

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Dutch canvas, with its sharp contrast of light and shadow, and the red glow of the forge shining on a row of rugged faces, dark and typical. There he would see the toilworn hands, which ten months had bleached to the whiteness of the coverlet on which they lay, seize and bend across his knee an iron bar as though it had been a willow wand.

Then suddenly befell the awful thing which had shut François from his wonted interests and pursuits and cast him on the bed, where for ten dragging months he had lain consumed with impotent hatred of Gaston Leroi, the origin of his wo. Cause and effect in François' tragedy seemed so piteously ill-adjusted. He and Gaston had been standing on a rude scaffolding encircling the belfry of the new brick church, that visible embodiment of the curé's life and ambition.

The bell, christened, according to a quaint old custom, on the preceding Sunday, was to be hoisted to its place, when between the two chosen for the task arose a sudden dispute concerning some trivial detail of its adjustment. The discussion, at first friendly, grew gradually warmer. François flung a hasty word which the fiery Gaston resented with a blow. François, recoiling in mo-

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mentary surprise, missed his footing, reeled backward and down, down for what seemed an eternity, to lie at last the maimed, twisted thing he must henceforth be; all the life of him centered in those eyes which sought the anguished Gaston with quenchless hate. Sometimes the nurse fancied that this hatred was wearing away his strong frame more surely than the actual malady. With the passing weeks it became a very obsession.

One class of visitor he alone welcomed: the doctors, old or young, famous and obscure, who passed through the long, white ward. To each, with rude civility, he put the same question, "What chance for me, M. le Docteur? Shall I ever be strong again?" But the answer, discreetly veiled by a mist of technical terms, gave him small encouragement.

"Shall I ever be well?" he asked on the first visit of the gentle curé, bowed down by this tragedy in the little flock to whom, like an aged St. John, he had so often preached "My little children, love one another." "You at least will give me a simple answer to a plain question. Shall I have one half hour of my old strength? It is not much to ask, one little half hour out of all my life."

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"To what end, my son?"

"It would then be possible to settle scores with Gaston," this new, strange François replied, with a quiet concentration of malevolent purpose.

The old curé pleaded with him brokenly: "God is giving you your purgatory here. Why do you refuse to sanctify your suffering? What a saint you could be, my poor François."

François waived the suggestion impatiently aside.

"You have not answered, mon père; shall I have that half hour?"

"My son, I can not tell; your whole life is in God's hands."

He lay awhile with closed eyes; then, "Will you read me a little in your Bible, M. le Curé?" he asked. "The story of Samson—he was a strong man that."

Instinctively the wasted arms moved in feeble reproduction of the motion which had once sent the knotted muscles rippling along their length. The gentle curé, whose heart suggested a dozen lessons more suited to the angry mood of this wandering son, knew not how to refuse so small a boon. Cheated of his giant strength, shut from his old pursuits, he seemed, across the centuries, to

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stretch his hands to this betrayed giant of Israel and greet him for a brother.

Like a pool reflecting shimmering sun and shade, his face mirrored each passing emotion of the old narrator. Blind, bound, surrounded by cowardly enemies, and triumphing at last, grimly, awfully, he followed the story with rapt interest.

When it was ended he drew a long, deep breath. "O Lord God, remember me and restore to me now my former strength."

"It was a man's prayer that," said François.

"But, François," answered the troubled curé, "have you forgotten that the very God who restored that strength for His own wise ends was Himself led bound and reviled before an earthly ruler? That at the last He prayed for His very murderers? With Gaston it was the evil impulse of a moment. He has no peace night or day."

"That is only just," replied François, gravely; "the moment has cost me dear. For your sake, I am sorry, mon père; but no, I can never forgive him," and the somber eyes closed wearily.

That was months before. Every week came Gaston's offerings of flowers and fruit, which, after the first, were never brought to François'

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bed, so terribly did the sight of them fan the smoldering embers of his hate. Every week Gaston's plea for admission met with the same grim answer: "Tell Gaston, when I regain the strength he stole from me we shall assuredly meet, and he will owe me nothing."

The long year had dragged at length to December. Through the window that faced his cot, François watched the whirling snowflakes. Of all the outdoor world he loved there remained to him only that little square of sky and the shaft of light, full of dancing motes, which traveled across his bed in the late afternoon and flew back, its journey done, to join forces with the sunset. But to-day a new vaguely disturbing element was being introduced in those green, resinous boughs, which he had last seen waving snow-laden between the free blue sky and the sparkling frost-bound earth. Their pungent fragrance, exhaling prodigally on the heated air, stirred many a sleeping memory. François, struggling, dimly resentful, was hurried on despite himself, as though the green clad ward were some enchanted vista, studded with far, almost forgotten, scenes from the untroubled past. 'Twas thus the quaint stone chapel of his childish remembrance used to smell

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of a Christmas Eve, warm with the breath of many worshipers and the flame of a hundred candles gleaming through the green boughs that encircled the crib. All his youth floated back to him with that pungent fragrance. Once again he was "le petit François," a happy child, with grave, wondering eyes, slipping a small brown hand in his mother's protecting clasp, and muffling for the long, wonderful walk through the hushed, starlit woods. No menace lurked in their mysterious depths, not even the evil "loup garou" was on such a night to be dreaded, and yet the child would invent a score of imaginary perils to enhance the zest of the journey. On, on beneath the whispering pines, over a snow-white world to keep a tryst with "le petit Jesu," lying with wide, welcoming arms among the lights and odorous boughs. Noël! Noël! How vividly the word recalled all that was best and brightest of his vanished youth. Sweet and sad and memory-laden, the old word kept knocking at his heart's closed door.

The voice of Angèle Dupont floated back to him across the years, fair, white-souled Angèle, whose footing on the gross earth had always seemed so slight; who slipped away at last, not guessing François' secret.

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"Noël! Noël! Voici le Redempteur!" Rich triumphant, piercingly sweet, how her voice used to soar with the old world music, while tears coursed down furrowed cheeks for the very beauty of it. Since that voice was hushed no harmony had seemed to François quite complete. Through all the changing years he had missed it.

Strange, unworldly little maid, he recalled another Christmas, when a little ahead of their elders, they had walked homeward side by side through the still shrouded world. Her mind was full of the curé's simple eloquence, her small, dark face rapt and sweet, her great brown eyes glowing with some inner radiance.

"See, François, it was just such a still, solemn night, little whispers running through the trees, and the great stars waiting, waiting. Then the skies opened a very little way, but the light was so strong and wonderful that the trees were shivering and the stars almost gone. Then came the shining angels all along the hilltops to say le bon Dieu was come. I saw it just like that when I was singing."

"Et in terra pax," the rich young voice rang gloriously out on the keen, clear air, and to François, walking by her side, the singer seemed as

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remote and fair as the angels of whom she spoke. "Et in terra pax!" His brow knit with a spasm of pain. It was a far cry from that free, starlit wood to the narrow ward where old François lay, surly and unloved, with a black hatred at his heart which shut him from the whole rejoicing world. His face grew white and drawn with the fierceness of his struggle, and seemed as though the still ward rang to the clash of spiritual armies. Nurses flitted about with an air of suppressed excitement, diffusing itself pleasantly through the shining room, which, under their deft fingers, had assumed an air of unwonted festivity.

"We must have the ward particularly lovely for Dr. Torrance's visit," he heard a nurse say as she hung a glossy holly wreath above his head. "His coming to us at all was such a wonderful favor."

All François' faculties were suddenly concentrated in an effort to follow the conversation, which sank to a discreet whisper. Dr. Torrance! That name was the one chink through which hope's glimmer had shone on the darkness of his future. He had once heard a doctor say, as he turned to avoid the mute question of François' eyes. "The case is beyond me; only Tor-

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rance could help him." The grim irony of it had struck François, and he laughed mirthlessly.

"Yes; Torrance in London, or the saints in heaven, M. le Docteur."

The remembered words awed him a little, for in some strange way the day had brought both helpers near that then had seemed remote, uncaring. "Perhaps I may have my half hour still," François murmured, his thoughts moving swiftly in their accustomed groove. Then the slow tears gathered in his eyes. "O God, I am a sinful man," he whispered brokenly.

* * * * *

The visit of the great Torrance had already taken its place among the hospital's traditions, when evening brought Gaston with his accustomed plea. From cot to cot along the ward patients flashed the terse phrases of his verdicts. The quick, incisive questions had cut their way to the root of disease, much as François' ax had once cleft to the heart of a giant pine, marred and nicked by a score of weakling blows.

"He is a man that," François said, saluting the strength behind those delicate, probing fingers, the intellect behind those keen, inscrutable eyes. The phrase on François' lips was a patent of no-

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bility. He had applied it sparingly, perhaps a dozen times in his life.

Over his bed the great surgeon had lingered longest, with the keen zest of a scientist facing a difficult problem. At length, turning to the attendant house-surgeon, he swiftly and lucidly outlined a treatment, and then answered the mute appeal of François' eyes:

"Yes, I believe we shall have you around yet, my man. I think you are one of the number who know how to wait."

"It will be easy, M. le Docteur, when there is hope at the end," said François, simply.

When Gaston, moving clumsily on roughshod feet through the long, still ward, was brought at last to Francois' bed, he seemed of the two men the more haggard and miserable. Slow tears coursed down his rugged cheeks as, nervously twisting his shabby cap in his toil-worn hand, he confronted for the first time the ruin he had wrought. François, who had pictured him strong, prosperous, and unrepentant, found the task to which he had nerved himself unexpectedly light.

"Gaston, my friend, you too have suffered," he said gently, and his wasted hand stole out to clasp the rugged brown one which had dashed

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life's brimming cup so rudely, if so unthinkingly, from his lips.

The night nurse, passing on her rounds, felt a detaining hand laid on her dress as she passed old François' bed. Worn by the day's emotions, the face looked out of the shadows white and drawn, but the dark eyes met hers with a new, friendly light.

"Will you give me a sprig of evergreen, nurse?" he said. "It reminds me of old days." Holding it fast, François fell asleep, to wander once again through the still, starlit woods of his youth.

It was in his hand when the gray dawn stole through the shutters, and the nurse flung wide the doors which stemmed the great tide of Christmas music, floating from the distant chapel. Gloria! Gloria! It bore the sufferers on its bosom far from the reality of pain. "Et in terra pax!" The grand old chant fell to a gentler cadence.

"I think Angèle is singing," said old François, and he pressed the sprig of evergreen to his trembling lips.

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THE ANSWER.

BY FRANCIS CHARLES CLARE.

"I CAN'T see the necessity of it all; that's the real answer for you, Mona," said Leicester, with an air of decision, very slightly touched with impatience.

Mona Carew saw the impatience and sighed slightly.

"There seems no use in going over the same ground again," she said wearily. "I can not marry a non-Catholic, and particularly not a man of such marked agnostic views as you appear to possess, Ralph. If you would only admit the possibility of enlightenment and consent to inquire into the mysteries of the faith, I should not speak so strongly. You can not, of course, be expected to renounce the theories of a lifetime for my sake and at my request. But surely inquiry into such vital matters would be worth your while."

"A mere waste of time, of which I have little enough to spare," rejoined Dr. Leicester. "I

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have too much to learn without trying to know the unknowable; and then, as I told you, I don't see the necessity of any formulated dogma or hard and fast creed. We are creatures of progress and change and we don't need hampering. We must be free if we would advance. Your creed is a restraining one, Mona; you must admit that."

"No," she said, quietly; "in nothing does it restrain a man except in evil, for it is true and its Founder said that Truth should make us free."

"'*Quid est veritas?*'" said Leicester smilingly, yet obviously bored.

Mona looked round her. They were sitting on a fallen tree, these two, looking over one of the fairest glades in Ireland. A river rushed along at their feet, foaming over great black boulders on its way to the sea. The shadow of the mountains darkened its waters, and gave an air of majesty and aloofness to the spot.

Mona loved to come here. Next to the seashore this was her favorite haunt. The strong, resistless river could always take possession of any sad thoughts she might have, and carry them away to the immensity of that ocean where its own self was swallowed up and lost.

Not that her thoughts were wont to be sad.

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Till Ralph Leicester had come into her life she had known little of sighs and far more of smiles. She had lived a happy, simple country life in her Irish home, with her horses and dogs, light of heart, though by no means of nature, fervent and strong in the faith of her country and forefathers, and little given to controversy and the propounding of problems, though not at a loss when asked to give an answer for the hope that was in her. She was thoughtful at times, for all her high spirits, and as really thoughtful people are seldom narrow-minded, Ralph Leicester was agreeably surprised at her intelligence whenever she chose to answer any of his arguments against religion.

He fancied that because she was a devout Catholic she must necessarily be a narrow-minded woman, albeit a charming one; but he soon found out his mistake. Mona was wide of mind as of heart and sympathies, and for this very reason so unalterable in her creed, which transcends all wisdom and scales all heights.

Her dark-blue eyes were wistful as she looked on the beauty of the summer glade. How could a clever man like Ralph be so blind? Here was loveliness and perfection, the work of a master hand; and why could not the man she loved see

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a corresponding symmetry in the Church of God? Words are seldom much use, however, and Mona forbore them as far as she might. Prayer, she knew, would do more for Ralph than anything else at present. Not that she feared to lose her temper. The time for that was past. As well be angry with a blind puppy as with the "invincible ignorance" of Leicester. Besides, who was she to be angry while her great Creator waited in an infinite patience?

It was no question of that, or of mean little bickerings or unworthy strife. They loved each other and spoke freely, without any fear of hurting or vexing. Only prayer was the very strongest of Mona's weapons, in its silence and sweet subtlety, and she said to herself, "He will soon know."

And Ralph thought, "I shall soon win her consent to at least our engagement."

Presently they rose to go, for Ralph had to catch the next Dublin train which should leave the little country station, and go back to his work.

"So I am again unsuccessful?" he asked, looking reproachfully at the girl at his side, as they climbed the beaten track which led up the mountain.

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Mona said nothing for a minute. Her eyes were hidden by her white lids.

"I shall keep on till I succeed, all the same," said Leicester, and his strong chin and resolute mouth seemed to confirm his words.

Mona smiled then in quiet security.

"We must wait," she said, "until you can see further and more clearly."

She looked up trustfully and sweetly into his strong, clear-cut face. "It will all come right soon, Ralph."

* * * * *

Ralph Leicester had a vague sort of idea, as he went back to Dublin that evening, that Mona regarded him as he was wont to regard his patients. He was sick and must be cured as soon as possible—that seemed to be her attitude. It was not soothing to his vanity, though it was good for his soul.

Toward the end of that summer he got an invitation from Mona's father to go down and spend a few days with them for the grouse shooting, which had just begun. It was about the time of his annual holiday, so he gladly availed himself of this opportunity of continuing his courtship of the girl he loved so well yet so ignorantly.

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The first Sunday at Lough Kerry was something of a trial for him. The distance between him and Mona seemed immeasurably greater when she left him in the library and went off with her parents to Mass at the little chapel in the village. Leicester was unusually sensitive for a scientifically-minded Englishman, and he felt absurdly out in the cold in his logical attitude in the library, turning over the leaves of his Darwin. So he strolled after the Carews for the sake of diversion, and sat down unobserved at the very back of the chapel.

He got interested in time in watching the people. Their devotion impressed him, and their evident absorption in the great act of worship in which they were all taking part pleased his sense of fitness.

"I should like to be made that way, I think," he said to himself. "Of all forms of religion this one is undoubtedly the highest and most ideal."

He slipped out before the Carews moved, and joined them on their way home without saying where he had been. Mona was looking very bright and happy. She carried a prayer-book and rosary, and Ralph offered to relieve her of them. He put

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the rosary in one pocket and the book in another, much to Mona's satisfaction.

"I want you to come and see a sick child in the village; will you, Ralph?" she asked.

He followed her to a low-roofed cabin at the far end of the few scattered dwellings which made up "the village." A low sound of weeping fell on their ears as they neared this cabin, and Mona turned pale and hastened her steps. "He is worse, I'm afraid," she said. The child, a boy of eleven or twelve, had died the night before, however.

Mona, tears on her cheeks, knelt on the mud floor by the side of the little body, the heartbroken mother crouching near. Together they murmured soft Gaelic prayers for the child's soul. The priest had been there, and the end, though unexpectedly sudden, had been peaceful.

Leicester stood behind Mona, caressing his rough tweed cap and feeling awkward. The poor, half-distracted mother only seeing that he was with one of the Carews, and must therefore be of their faith, begged him to say a Hail Mary for her child.

A gleam came into Mona's eyes. "Say it after me to prevent hurting her feelings," she whispered.

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Leicester knelt down, very hot and indignant, and repeated the Angelical Salutation in a strong, embarrassed voice.

"That prayer," he remarked after they had left the cabin, "that prayer, said by your side on a muddy floor in an Irish cabin is the first I ever said in my life."

Mona said nothing, but her eyes smiled.

* * * * *

When they said good-night he asked her for something belonging to her to keep—a ribbon or some such trifle. She gave him a tiny silver medal —one of the Miraculous Medals—and he wore it for her sake day and night.

* * * * *

Squire Carew was shooting his moors one afternoon with Leicester, when the doctor's gun exploded, wounding him in the arm. They thought it a light matter at first, a mere flesh wound, and Mona proved a first-rate nurse, but inflammation set in, and the local doctor looked grave.

Poor Mona! Her heart grew sick with fear in those days. She knelt by Leicester's side while he slept for a few brief minutes once, her rosary twisted round her trembling fingers, every breath she drew a prayer. Recovery for soul and body—

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how she prayed for this none ever knew. Leicester's handsome face looked as though chiseled out of marble as he lay there. Suddenly, when she least expected it, his eyes opened and he looked full at her.

"Who has been praying for me?" he asked, with startling abruptness.

"All of us, dear," said Mona.

"Yes, here on earth; but out there in the great spaces of Eternity who has been specially pleading for my soul?" he asked, in a strangely dreamy tone.

Amazed, overjoyed, and puzzled, the girl made no reply. Then suddenly light broke upon her.

"The soul of that child for whom you prayed once is now praying for you," she said exultantly; "joining its voice with the voice of our blessed Mother, and the saints and angels, its brothers and sisters in eternity."

Leicester lay looking at her silently, but with a curious intentness in his gaze.

* * * * *

He did not die, though he came very near to death, and his gratitude and joy over his wonderful recovery were great, and led him by rapid steps to a logical conclusion. He came at length to

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"see," and he saw very clearly; and because he was a strong man he was not content to see and understand and know.

So he went further still, and consecrated his newly restored life to the God who had given it to him.

And the great and wonderful day when the anointed hands of Ralph Leicester first offered the Spotless Victim to the Eternal Father was the proudest and happiest of Mona's life.

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LUCIA'S ROMANCE.

BY ANNA T. SADLIER.

MARTINO'S confectionery "round the corner" had always been a place of enchantment to the children of the neighborhood. What glories it represented to eyes that were too often the companions of a hungry mouth. The tall, icing cake of two or three stories, profusely decorated, appeared perennially in the window; not the same one, of course, but its exact facsimile was shown there, week after week, month after month, year after year, generation after generation. Like the confectionery itself, the immortal secret of its fabrication was handed down from father to son.

It was not, of course, alone in the window, or its delights might have palled upon those to whom it was so utterly unattainable. It was supplemented by wares which catered to every taste and suited almost every pocket. Numbers of queer little figures in sugar, at a variety of prices, were particular favorites. There were also cakes, coated with icing of varied colored flavor, gingercakes, doughnuts, macaroons, jumbles, shrews-

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burys, cocoanuts, in fact, all those that appeal to the ordinary American child who is in a position to taste cakes at all. There were others in that Italian emporium, however, far more mysterious in their compound, bestuck with pistachio-nuts, pecans, the humble peanut, and the lordly almond. In their foreign fashion they were most tempting to the small epicures, who gazed and who, alas! rarely tasted. They were the complement of candies in ornamental jars of glass or stands of porcelain, destined to be the anticipation, the delight, or the despair of the children thronging that populous neighborhood.

The neighborhood, it may as well be said at once, was not aristocratic, was not exclusive, was not even clean. It was scarcely, in the opinion of the world, respectable. It came perilously near to being described as a slum. Nevertheless, that portion of New York, like the rest of the metropolis, had its own individual joys and sorrows. Home, that meant to many of its denizens a room or two in a crowded tenement, was oftentimes as dear and precious as is a mansion on Fifth Avenue to its favored inhabitants. Hope bloomed and died in that populous thoroughfare. Happiness had its spring and love its fervid sum-

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mer. The children, of course, had their empire there, as elsewhere, which can always be founded even upon ruins.

And in this kingdom of childhood, the Italian confectionery stood supreme, especially at the holiday time, when its window burst into an exuberance of marvelous products, and became a thing of beauty and a joy forever. As for the confectioner himself, who enjoyed a far higher-sounding title in his native Italian and in more pretentious neighborhoods would have been styled a caterer, he remained to the children a vague abstraction. Few of them had ever caught a glimpse of him. They beheld him only in his works, and regarded him as an almost omnipotent potentate, scarcely more real than the magician of their fairy books or Aladdin of the lamp.

Among the most constant frequenters of the window and the most enthusiastic admirers of its marvels, was Lucia Mallon, who, it must be owned, devoured the good things displayed therein much more frequently with her eyes than with her pearly little teeth. Lucia was a very pretty child, Irish on the father's side, Italian upon the mother's, and she inherited the beauty of the two races. She lived in the most unpropitious surroundings,

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in a courtyard overlooked on all sides by tall tenements. The Mallons, though honest and decent, were undeniably poor. Her father, who had never been taught a trade, was glad to eke out a scanty sustenance for his family by attending to furnaces in winter and doing any sort of odd jobs in the summer.

Lucia often stood before the confectioner's window, raising one little bare foot and then another from the ground when the pavement began to grow cold, arrayed in the poorest and shabbiest of frocks, only kept together by the mother's patient industry. And so standing, Lucia used to speculate upon what she would buy if she were rich. She had her favorites among the sugar people. For instance, she very much coveted a tiny bride in robes of frosted sugar and a veil upon her head, accompanied by a dapper little gentleman in white trousers and blue coat.

She sighed, thus it may be seen, for the unattainable, and her daring dreams even scaled to the third story of the cake. She felt an eager desire to tear it down, or at least to witness its demolition and to taste its component parts. Perhaps she was a Nihilist at heart. If so, she was unaware of the fact, and went her way a sweet,

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merry, unconscious maiden, caroling like a bird, through the sunny paths of childhood. She was scarcely aware of her poverty and its consequent privations, though Martino's window, in fact, reminded her more than anything else of those sad realities.

* * * * *

Having thus sung her way, as it were, through the May-time of childhood, plucking the flowers upspringing in the arid soil about her, she reached the June of early womanhood. She was beautiful, and she was fairly well educated, having assiduously attended the parochial school. She was, therefore, enabled to earn a moderate sum monthly, by which, besides assisting her parents, she procured for herself shoes which, of course, were whole, and frocks that, though inexpensive, were decidedly becoming. She had an artist's instinct for the colors which best suited her.

The whole neighborhood, leaving aside the envious and malicious, who should not be permittel to form part of any neighborhood, took a pride in Lucia's beauty. The quarter, and particularly the special tenement, wherein the Mallons had their abode and the courtyard upon which their windows looked, were very much interested to dis-

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cover that the girl had a beau. Not one of the idle, admiring sort, that had been disposed to flock about her, but a sober, marriageable sort of man, who, as it rumored, desired to invest her with a gold ring and the dignity of wife. There was some mystery about this personage. No one had seen him with Lucia, which circumstance was entirely due to management upon her part, and to a certain shy reticence in matters of the sort, which veiled her beauty in much the same way that the verdure veils a moss-rose. She did not desire to parade her lover before the eyes of the neighborhood and she could not be induced to talk. When she was sore pressed with questions, she replied, with twinkling eyes and face rippling over with laughter:

"I will tell you all just before the banns are called, but not till then."

She spoke thus, usually, when surrounded in the evening by an audience composed of many of the children of the vicinity, with whom she was a favorite and who could never realize she had really grown up, and a number of the young people about Lucia's own age. It was their custom to gather in the courtyard as long as the weather permitted, and to talk of all manner of

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things. Occasionally Lucia's sweetheart, after the two had been betrothed, presented her with horns full of almonds, or the most delicious of the nut cakes for which she had once sighed, and she generally distributed these offerings among her cronies. Only she could never be induced to tell her lover's name, his occupation, nor when they were going to be married. Her father and mother knew, keeping their own counsel, however, and that sufficed.

In spite of environment, Lucia's was certainly a very pretty little romance. Its hero was a young man, somewhat older and graver than the girl he had chosen. He was dark and thoughtful of face, slender and somewhat stooped of figure, with a general air of respectability and of being beyond the range of those with whom Lucia ordinarily associated. They had, or, more properly speaking, Lucia had, various little devices for meeting outside of the quarter. The girl was anxious to keep her secret as long as possible. Only her parents knew where she was going when she set out, immediately after her early supper, dressed in her most becoming frock, with a flush upon her cheek, a joyful light in her eyes and a smile upon her lips. Antonio and she found their

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principal happiness in a walk which they took every fine evening together. Once—it was in an exquisite summer twilight—the pair extended their walk as far as the river, that homely East River, of which no poet as yet has sung. Nevertheless, it has a world of poetry in the sweep of its broad, level surface, flashing in the sunlight, agitated to mimic storms and waves by the truant winds, winding past the great cities lying upon its banks and upward into the heart of the country. It looked its best that lovely evening, with the deep crimson from the western sky turning it into ruby and opal under the eyes of the lovers. It was sufficiently poetic, at all events, for Lucia, who found something satisfying to her nature in its freedom and breadth.

She sat down upon the edge of the dock, clad in a simple frock of dark red, which brought out her marvelous coloring and accentuated the glint of her bronze-tinted hair. Despite his prosaic surroundings, Antonio was the most ardent, the most chivalrous, and the most deferential of lovers, strongly imbued, moreover, with the poetry of the south. He gazed upon Lucia with an almost wondering admiration before he ventured to seat himself by her side. He was never weary,

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indeed, of admiring her and idealizing her, regretting that he was not rich, so as to take her away to Italy, and cause her to be painted by famous artists. Deep down in his heart he hoped that this dream might some time be realized, and who can say? For is it not often the unexpected which comes to pass, and the fancy of to-day becomes the fact of to-morrow? It seemed as far off and as unattainable as Lucia's childish dream of possessing and demolishing the three-story cake. The girl could never have imagined how far these ambitious projects threatened to carry her lover, even to the breaking through of traditions and the cutting loose from old ties. Lucia's horizon was a limited one, and she felt persuaded that in her approaching marriage her highest aspirations would be satisfied. Moreover she was deeply, warmly and honestly in love with the young man beside her, and for his sake would have been willing to give up everything. As she looked out over the water, the salt breath of the distant sea bringing a slight color to her cheek, the lover said, suddenly:

"You are so very beautiful, Lucia, and I am not worthy of you. You should have married a

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great signor, who would have taken you into his world."

Lucia, opening her eyes wide, turned them in astonishment upon her lover.

"Why, you foolish Antonio," she cried, "what should *I* do among lords and ladies?"

"They would worship your beauty even as I do, *ma mie*," declared Antonio, fervently.

The happy laugh of the girl's unconsciousness floated out over the water.

"My beauty!" she exclaimed, "and always my beauty. Why do you let these fancies trouble your mind when you are offering me so much, and are going to make me the envy of every girl in the quarter?"

Antonio shook his head.

"What I am giving you is not much," he said, sadly. "You do not know your own value. Pray God you never may when it is too late. If you were to change, then—"

A look of pain that was almost agony shot across the young man's face at the thought; what if Lucia, in the wider knowledge of life that would come with years and improved circumstances, should ever repent?

"What do you mean by too late?" the girl

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demanded, with a gravity which transformed her beautiful face into the likeness of some pictured Madonna. "You do not mean after we are married, and the priest has given his blessing and united us until death do us part. You surely can not mean, Antonio, that I should ever change after *that!*"

"You are such a child!" sighed the young man.

"I am a Christian," Lucia said, solemnly, "and when we are married, I shall have the grace of the sacrament. A wife does not change after that, even if the husband is bad, which you will never be."

Antonio bowed his head, rebuked by the dignity of her attitude and her simple faith in the power of the sacrament.

"If the good God has given me beauty," she went on, "it was not for anything like that. It was, perhaps, to make you love me, as I love you."

There was something inexpressibly winning in the look and tone with which these words were said. Antonio raised his head.

"You do love me, then?" he asked.

"With all my heart and soul," she answered. She had never told him as much before in so

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many words. She had been gently reticent, captivatingly reserved, letting her tenderness and her pleasure in her lover's society show itself, as it were, in pretty glimpses, passing gleams. It moved Antonio strangely to hear her confess this now, in the soft loveliness of the twilight.

"Lucia, my adored one!" he cried, using those epithets which in the fervid Italian tongue come so naturally to the lips, "you are not, then, marrying me because I am richer than you, and can give you—"

"Sugar plums and almond cakes?" she inquired, a ripple of laughter overspreading her face at the thought. A moment later the laughter faded and her expression changed to one of the deepest gravity.

"Unless I loved you," she cried, "I would not marry you if you had all the wealth that is in this city. I would rather go barefoot for the rest of my life and wear ugly frocks and feel hungry, as I have done very often."

Antonio was satisfied at last, and they sat in a happy silence, looking out over the water, watching the sunset fading away and withdrawing its radiance from the thick clustering roofs and spires

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of the city upon the river's banks. At last, Lucia rose.

"It is time we were going home," she said briefly.

"Oh," sighed the lover, "you love me less than I love you, since you can think of time."

He made no further objection, however, for he knew that it was wise of Lucia always to return homeward with the first stars that peeped out in the sky. Only, as they arose to thread their way back again through those swarming streets where sight, hearing and the olfactories were all offended, he exclaimed:

"I brought you here that you might name our wedding-day, Lucia, and you have not yet done so."

"Let it be what day you wish," she answered simply, "once the banns are called, we need not delay."

* * * * *

Before the banns were called Lucia kept her promise of disclosing her lover's identity to such denizens of the quarter, old and young, as chanced to be assembled in the courtyard after supper. The mellow evening light took some of the ugliness from the scene, and rendered the

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expectant group unconsciously picturesque. It fairly glorified Lucia as she stood among them, smiling at the news she had to impart:

"I am going to be married in three weeks' time," she announced, with a faint, pretty flush; her voice was soft and rich, like a melody.

"To whom, Lucia?" exclaimed several voices.

"Guess!"

"Oh, how can we guess?"

"You must."

A girl, who constituted herself a spokesman for the rest, began to check off, upon her fingers, Lucia's known admirers:

"Alphonse, the cab-driver at the big hotel?"

Lucia shook her head.

"Marco, the image vender?"

"No!"

"John Carroll, the bricklayer?"

"No, indeed."

"Luigi, the barber?"

"Better than that."

"Joe Smith, the barber."

"Better than that."

"Wallace, the master-mason."

"Better than that."

"There is no better," grumbled an old woman

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who sat by in an arm chair, as interested as the youngest in the gossip that was going forward. "Wallace has a house and money in the bank."

Lucia clapped her hands, her eyes danced with merriment.

"Stupid people, I shall have to tell you," she cried.

The crowd waited in breathless expectation. They formed a picture there in that squalid courtyard, with the tall tenements disfigured by the fire-escapes, towering above them so as almost, but not quite, to exclude the gleams of the dying sunshine.

"I am going to be married in white, with a veil upon my head, like the sugar bride," the girl announced—and this in itself created a sensation.

"And what do you think I am going to have at my wedding-breakfast? Guess!"

"We are tired of guessing!" cried an eager chorus.

"The three-storied cake in the confectionery around the corner," exclaimed Lucia impressively.

"The cake in Martino's confectionery!" echoed the chorus, fairly stupefied. Lucia nodded and

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there was a breathless pause of wonder, of anticipation, a half doubt that the girl might be romancing. It was broken by the murmured inquiry:

"Tell, oh, tell us quick, Lucia, who is the bridegroom."

"The bridegroom," declared Lucia, trying not to look too triumphant, "is the confectioner himself, Antonio Martino."

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MICKEY'S FREEHOLD.

BY MAUD REGAN.

THE graveyard at Tyrconnel climbs a gentle slope whose summit, of a clear day, affords glimpses of a restless silver sea, which often sends its messengers thus far inland.

Now it is a strong salt gale, before which the frightened daisies cower in the grass; again a snowy gull like the restless ghost of some one who finds it hard to rest beneath that tossing silver winding sheet, and is drawn by the peace of this flower-starred "God's Acre."

One familiar with the life stories of its sleepers might fancy Victory's palms and Purity's lilies springing of themselves from such a soil, but nature has cared for the spot in her own way, filling the fence corners with gorse, powdering the slope with daisies, and screening the mounds with harebells and the homely nameless blooms which were part of the summer times the sleepers used to know.

Few "monuments," half a score at most, and these one is tempted to regret, break the sweep

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of velvet green. Who in Tyrconnel needs a stone to mark the sunny stretch that has always been the Bradys' or the corner where, every spring, the gnarled thorn drops a scented pall over the Flannerys' resting place?

And for the alien, what interest have these lowly folk when crowning the slope and dominating Tyrconnel in death as once in life, the O'Conways, sometime lords of the soil, lie in a crumbling mortuary chapel, the joy of the infrequent antiquary? Mutilated stones graven in stately Latin invite to a contemplation of the virtues these have taken with them, and the titles they have left behind, and Time has added an "*Omnia Vanitas*" in the dismantled choir, where birds carol blithe matins, and the broken casements whence stream green pennons of the ivy. Perhaps it is to point his lesson that he has torn the Gothic roof from over their fallen heads, while defying the gales of threescore winters, the low green thatch is safe and snug over "Mickey's freehold."

Michael Flinn was its tenant's name in the days when he had need of special designation. The name, like many another honored of Tyrconnel, passed in the dread famine year to a place among

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its memories. The ambition which set all his life to one tune, and the grim irony of its realization, has kept his name alive and sent a pitying "God rest him" heavenward long after the time when he could reasonably hope to be remembered. And so, having begun his story where it should logically end, let us follow an old clew that leads backward to a certain November day when the last century and Mickey both were young.

A mere slip of a boy with sparkling eyes and a shock of black curls that were always falling over them, he sped along the bleak highway, his red lips crumpled in a seductive whistle which had lured a credulous blackbird from leafless bush to bush, in quest of an errant mate.

An empty jug dangled from one hand, and the other brown fist enclosed the threepenny bit which was to fill it with buttermilk, and leave a penny over for red yarn, a bit of which had been prudently tied about his wrist, as a reminder amid the distractions of the way.

Flushed with the success of his invitations, he launched into a whistle whose elaboration just outdid nature, and the blackbird fluttered scornfully across the field. Mickey's artist pride smarted beneath this failure: "Bad manners to

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you for a great ugly crow!" he screamed angrily, and to point the remark, a brown fist, more used to the possession of stones than coin of the realm, sent the precious threepenny bit flying on the trail of the objurgation.

Beneath the enormity of the indiscretion, and the certainty of a reckoning proportionately heavy, even Mickey's light heart sank.

After an hour's vain search among the stones and rough grass, he retraced his steps, a leaden-footed messenger; the empty jug dangling dejectedly from one hand, the red yarn gleaming on the other for his greater condemnation. And, as if to furnish a final commentary on the evils of improvidence, a turn of the road brought him, for the first time, face to face with the tragic and afterward familiar spectacle of an eviction. A cabin from which the roof had been newly riven fronted the road, where a slender stock of household goods were rudely piled. A white, anxious-eyed woman, to whose skirts two wailing children clung, dazedly surveyed the wreck, while the man at her side followed with sullen eyes the movements of the receding, scarlet-coated figures, rising and falling in their saddles: doubtless glad to have done with their ignoble task.

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Instinctively grasping a situation for which his experience afforded no precedent, the frightened child sped homeward with the dire news. "The roof was off the Flannery's place, their bits of things in the road, an' 'himself,' standin' beside them glarin' after the sojers, wid eyes of him like burnin' coals."

As the tidings spread, neighbors with roofs in better case, hurried to the woful scene with offers of assistance. One of the children, a dark-eyed slip of a girl, ragged and lovely, came to the Flinn's to await those "better days" which seemed sufficiently remote, though so confidently predicted. In the general consternation Mickey's conduct escaped reprobation, the lost threepence being dismissed with the sentiment at once pious and philosophical: "God send no greater loss!"

But the germs of worldly wisdom sown in Mickey's heart grew apace in those long winter evenings, when, from conversation about the turf fire, he gathered that the Flannery's experience—the Lord between us and harm—was a thing might happen to any one that hadn't "the rint" ready against quarter day. Through wakeful nights attendant upon such discussions he would be haunted by visions of the roofless cabins, the droop-

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ing figures in the lonely road, and the scarlet blur of the soldiers' coats, rising and falling against the bleak gray of a November sky.

Tales of the "good people" or ill-disposed giants, which had erstwhile woven themselves through his wakeful hours, receded to a dim background of memory, for, in his vague childish way, the lad was grappling with this grim, new factor, which must somehow be eliminated from the sum of things, if life were ever to regain its former zest.

The result of his musings he confided to Bride Flannery as they sat one evening in their dusky corner, forgotten by the garrulous elders. Some day he would have a place of his own—"a freehold" he called it—a delectable spot haunted by no specter of an unprovided "rint day," where they two would dwell in immeasurable content. It seemed only fair to compensate Bride for fate's buffetings by including her in these brilliant prospects. She dimly realized Mickey's generosity, and sighed happily as one whose earthly doubts are all allayed.

One gathers that in pursuit of this ambition, almost unique in one of his race and time, Mickey trod the ways of frugality and toil till the spring

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of his twenty-second year—a spring no fairer or sweeter than any gone before, but that Mickey's senses, dulled by the narcotic of ceaseless toil, seemed to stir and wake beneath its appeal. From the distant goal his eyes turned to mark the fairness of the way—the splendor of the gorse flung across the fields, the scent of the hawthorn, the gleam of the rain in the primrose's cup, the radiance of the sunlight slanting gold green through a screen of interlacing boughs. And of all this freshly perceived wonder and glow, Bride Flannery seemed a part. Wandering beside her through fragrant, thrush-haunted lanes, he forgot his cares, his ambition, and remembered only that the Flannerys, fallen at last upon better days, spoke of stealing his treasure from his side. His whole being arose in protest against the decree, and for the second time Mickey threw prudence to the wind. Toil on till he was bent and gray for a place of his own, knowing all the while that those eyes, brown as the fresh-budded hazel, were glowing on an alien hearth, remote as the stars to which he likened them? Under such conditions Mickey realized that even the freehold would prove but Dead Sea fruit.

The cause of worldly wisdom found but a halt-

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ing advocate in Bride Flannery, secretly convinced of the absolute security of any roof owned, or leased, whereof Mickey was the prop, and so, with stout hearts and few misgivings, they faced the future side by side.

In the sunshine of Bride's presence he was as recklessly happy as though "quarter day" would never recur. And if, with prosaic regularity, it did appear, was not the rent ready punctual to the minute, besides a comforting addition to the purchase fund in the box under the eaves, whose growth, Bride and Mickey, and with the passing years, two curly-haired children, Dan and Nora, watched with fearful pride. "A home of our own"—that was the modest goal toward which the entire family strained, no privation too rigorous, no toil too heavy that brought it near.

Under Mickey's careful farming the arid soil miraculously flourished, while the children, anxious to shoulder their share of the load, set their small strength to clear and pile in a compact wall about the little holding, the stones that were apparently the one crop indigenous to the soil.

"You'd never know it for the same place!" Bride proudly exclaimed times without number. And as though to ratify her opinion, there came

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a quarter day when the agent greeted Mickey with the news that the rent of it was raised to a figure which made further addition to the purchase fund seem extremely problematical. Remonstrances were met with a curt intimation that another tenant was looking at the place, and he might "take it or leave it."

Mickey, confronted with the option, "took it," but the light began to fade from his eyes, and his shoulders to droop eloquently during those half-dozen years of dogged bending over the stubborn soil, which must somehow be made to yield the difference.

The purchase fund, at first augmented by the frequent shilling and occasional sovereign, remained a long while stationary, then ebbed a little beneath the demands of a quarter day that found Mickey "a trifle short." Dan came upon his father abstracting from the sacred hoard the required amount, and though no words were spoken, to each the action seemed ominous and significant. For the first time the lad's faith in the ultimate fulfilment of the family hope wavered. The father's heart harbored an answering dread, for circumstances seemed so inexorably hostile.

In distant counties the famine specter raised

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its gaunt head, and Tyrconnel itself lay in the grip of an overmastering fear, before which her youth was already fleeing to a Land of Promise beyond the sea.

Dan's eyes wistfully followed the outgoing pilgrims as they swung hopefully down the gray, wet road that seemed to lead straight to a Tom Tiddler's ground, where the sorely needed money was to be had for the picking. But Mickey's eyes roamed no further than those drooping figures in the cabin doors, greedily hoarding each least detail in the receding forms of "the childher," in a fear that found no other expression.

Curiously enough, both arrived at a like conclusion, impelled thereto by divergent but equally unselfish motives—the children must leave Tyrconnel.

Striving to reconcile Bride to the approaching separation, Mickey said:

"'Twould be something to have the childher out of harm's way if all went to all," the closing euphemism veiling the dire possibilities of the evil twain, fever and famine, overrunning the land.

Dan and Nora were certain that a couple of years' joint industry in the distant Eldorado

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would easily result in the acquisition of a home whose comforts transcended father's wildest dreams. "And the time wouldn't be long slippin' away"—that was the point on which they seemed most clear.

Seeing that all their eloquence left Bride unconvinced on this score, and that her eyes were unable to pierce the future's brilliant veil for the blurring tears of the hard present, Mickey nerved himself for the final sacrifice. It was made simply between pulls at his stubby pipe, which cleverly managed to bridge the gaps in the halting phrases, and give a casual effect to the suggestion: "To be sure I wouldn't be aisy in me mind to think of them goin' all that way be thimselves. I was thinkin' you might go over just to see thim settled. Dan has as much saved as'll pay his passage, and there's plinty in the tin box for you and Nora. I could follow ye if ye liked the place, but perhaps 'twould be better if ye brought the money back to Tyrconnel. 'Tis here I'd always planned to have a place of me own, and I doubt if 'twould seem natural anywhere else."

The hoard in the thatch counted eagerly, proved more than adequate to its diverted use,

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and Bride, sorely torn between two affections, was persuaded on the distinct understanding of a return as soon as "the childher were comfortably settled, and airnin'." But the forces of Mickey's being seemed to have been absorbed in one supreme effort, and a sense of the finality of the separation was on him through the days of preparation.

This was cleverly hidden from "herself and the childher," till the very last moment, when, turning on the crest of the ultimate rise, beyond which the road sinks from sight amid engulfing heather, they beheld his handkerchief tied to the end of his stick signaling them a gay good-by. "Father takes it rale well!" said Nora, gulping back a little sob. Meanwhile Mickey, wondering if it were all a dream or, if he were awake, why it didn't hurt more, stumbled onward through the unchanged world, to deliver to the agent the key of the home which he felt was never to be his. The empty coffer was in his hand and he tossed it from him into a wayside bush. A startled blackbird fluttered across the field, just as had happened on a November day long gone, when a curly-headed gossoon with the world be-

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fore him, sped along the bleak highway on bare tingling feet.

That little crimson bar on the sunset's gate might have been the distant red of the soldiers' coats. "Well, *they're* out of harm's way, thank God!" said Mickey, shaking off the crowding memories.

In this field and that he lent a hand on easy terms; "the bit he'd eat and a place to sleep in" were what he stipulated for, and these, it is comforting to remember, he never lacked.

In the one brief hopeful letter, which, an indifferent penman, he yet achieved to the end of fortifying "herself" against possible rumors of disaster, he suppressed all mention of the "quare blackness" which had begun to invade the potato drills, or the fever which had already taken grim toll of the stay-at-homes.

He confined himself to the statement that "he was so pestered wid the attintions of the neighbors he hadn't a minit to be lonesome," which we may hope was not reckoned against him in the accounting to which he soon after passed.

The fever found in him a passive victim. Somehow his grip of life seemed to have relaxed with his hold of the purpose which had domi-

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nated it, but it wove itself through his wanderings, revealing more of his ambition than the neighbors had ever guessed. There were other times when his tongue slipped off into "quare nonsense," to which no one had a clew.

"I'm threepence short in the rint, but it was all the fault of the blackbird. I heard him singin' in the bush, and sure I thought 'twould always be spring," he said on one such occasion.

"Never trouble your head about it, man," Tom Brady rejoined soothingly. "'Tis terrible hard to have the rint ready these times, but they'd niver put ye out for the matther of threepence."

Blown together like leaves on a keening autumn gale, anxious-eyed neighbors drifted toward the room where Mickey lay in the brief halt before the long journey.

Father John, wofully busy these dark days among his unworldly flock, had made him ready for the end, and in the peace following on his ministrations it almost seemed that Mickey had already slipped his moorings. But one strand still held. "I'm givin' ye a dale of trouble," he said, apologetically, to Father John, "but I've a notion I'd rest aisier if 'twas written over my grave, that I was never to be put out of it. With

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the rate folks are dyin' there'll soon be more room in the village than in the graveyard. It's been on me mind since I heard how they're buryin' the folks in trenches down Tralee way. I doubt it's a quare notion," said Mickey wistfully, "but all me life I've wanted a house of me own, and I'd be more content if I thought ye'd see to it."

Father John soothed him with the required promise with an overwhelming sense of the encompassing tragedy: The outgoing pilgrim with his steady, futile straining toward so small a goal; the group of bowed figures framed in the open doorway, against a background of arid fields and leaden skies. A flash of inspiration shone across the gloom, revealing an eternal compensation beyond the passing tragedy.

Thrilling with passionate pity and intense conviction his voice rang out through the hushed room: "In my Father's house are many mansions." And as he spoke Mickey passed beyond the veil.

* * * * *

It is long since the wooden cross, which, amid the crowding horrors of the famine year, Father John yet remembered to set over Mickey's grave,

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crumbled into the deep flower-starred grass; it is long, since, from other shores, Bride passed to the tryst which earth denied, but, should you pass Tyrconnel way, any child could show you the narrow, flower-decked mound which tradition has set apart as "Mickey's freehold."

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